

ALUMNIATING OUR WORLD

SPRING 5779

# EMBRACE

T H E E D U C A T I O N I S S U E

## ALWAYS CONNECTED: A BR STORY OF CROSS-GLOBE CONNECTION

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# *JUST ONE THING*

---

Sara (Kravitsky) Blau  
Graduating class of 2006

*"Don't talk like that to your brother."*

*"Don't talk like that to your mother."*

*"Are you saying the truth?"*

*"Hurry up- you need to learn how to be more organized!"*

Do you ever find yourself issuing a train of commands to your child, student, or even yourself?

*"You should budget better."*

*"You should not be eating that."*

*"You haven't volunteered in a while."*

*"You should be going to Shiurim more often."*

Here's the thing with trying to tackle a number of things at once: it simply does not work. In Klalei Chinuch V'Hadracha , the Friediker Rebbe states clearly that an educator or counselor should not attempt to rectify two things at the same time. If a student struggles with both lying and getting angry, the educator should help his student target the anger first.

The theme of this issue is Education, in honor of the auspicious day Yud Alef Nissan. Read on to find out how it became "Education Day USA", as well as tips and inspiration on how we can educate ourselves, our families, and the people around us. Hear from your fellow alumni around the world, and find yourself opening up to new perspectives.

But remember: After reading so many articles, don't get overwhelmed and start changing everything. Just pick one thing. ■

# BAIS RIVKAH'S MISSION

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from Anash Chinuch

During the year 5706 (1946), the Association of Bais Rivkah Schools, under the auspices of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, held its annual dinner. As the representative of Merkos, the Rebbe addressed the function. The following is adapted from the Rebbe's address, recorded by the Rebbe in his personal diary:

When my saintly father-in-law, the [Previous] Rebbe, visited the United States 16 years ago in 1930, he took great interest in the condition of Jewish education. Subsequently, on his return six years ago (on Tes Adar, 5701 (1941)), he observed the development that had ensued in the interim, and after a period of preparation, he founded the network of schools for girls called "Bais Rivkah" or "Bais Sarah."

*Rather, the entire issue is a question of assuring the continuity and survival of Jewish children.*

However, as is the case with any new project, many objected to his activities, showering him with all sorts of questions and queries....Yet the education of Jewish girls today no longer involves a question of whether their Torah study is legitimate. Rather, the entire issue is a question of assuring the continuity and survival of Jewish children.

This is because, in most circumstances, they are raised in an environment submerged in the pursuit of "earning a living," or conversely (when

the livelihood is ample), in an environment of ambition to simply "have a good time." Consequently, they fail to sense the theme expressed in the verse, "Viniflinu ani v'amcho mikol ho'om asher al p'nei hoadamah" - "And I and your nation shall be made distinct from every people upon the face of the earth." From their perspective, Judaism is synonymous with restrictions, prohibitions, and so forth - perhaps even personal suffering...

This is the function of the "Bais Rivkah" and "Bais Sara" schools, founded by my saintly father-in-law, the Rebbe: to impress upon the hearts of the students that they are B'nos Yisrael - Jewish daughters, and to explain to them the sanctity of Yiddishkeit, the virtue and purity that it yields, and the responsibility that each one of them bears.

That being said, the response to the second question posed is also obvious. People asked, "Are you founding a school to create 'Rebbetzins'?"

Our aim is that every student should recognize her duty as a Bas Yisrael, being a member of the Jewish nation, and one who will establish a Jewish home in the future as a Jewish mother...

Surely, for the sake of even saving one soul from straying from the path of Torah and mitzvos, we must grant all we can toward this end. This is true in particular for girls, in whom we hope to see the fulfillment of the verse, "The wisest of women, each one builds her home" - on the foundation of Torah and mitzvos. ■

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*While it is Bais Rivkah that unites us, it is the Rebbe's vision that binds us.*

# *ALWAYS CONNECTED*

*Three Bais Rivkah girls. One story.*

---

Sarah (Lerner) Cunin  
Graduating class of 1995

*I* graduated Bais Rivkah in 1995. I have fond memories of my high school years and still keep in touch with many of my classmates. What I did not realize was that the same powerful connection binds all Bais Rivkah students, regardless of when they attended the school.

This past fall, I received an email from Mrs. Chaya Kramer, who taught in Bais Rivkah in the late 1960s through the middle 1970s, and is still in touch with one of her former students. As a current educator, I know how remarkable this is. For a student and teacher to stay in touch for so many years shows commitment on both of their behalfs. Chaya contacted me because her student, Merle, (who still calls her Morah fifty years later!) now lives in Sparks, NV, and she wanted mezuzos put up on all the doors of her home.

Sparks is a small city in Northern Nevada with an even smaller Jewish population. My husband and I are the shluchim for the region and live about a twenty minute drive from Merle. We arranged, with Chaya's encouragement, to put up mezuzos at her house. While our husbands put up the mezuzos, Merle regaled us with stories of her years in Bais Rivkah. My kids, who had joined

us for the mitzvah, were delighted that several of her stories featured their Zaide Rabbi Pinchas Cunin, who was Bais Rivkah's administrator in the 1960s and 1970s.

After putting up mezuzos in Merle's house, I feel an unmistakable connection to both Merle and Chaya.

While it is Bais Rivkah that unites us, it is the Rebbe's vision that binds us. The Rebbe felt very strongly about the power of Jewish education. As an educator, that is not something I can take lightly. Seeing this beautiful relationship between Chaya and Merle still unyielding after so many years is truly inspiring. Being a part of it is special and humbling.

---

### Chaya Rivkah (Hodakov) Kramer Graduating Class of 1965

Looking back at my time spent in Bais Rivkah, from the first day of kindergarten through elementary, high school, and seminary, and then my years as a teacher, my thoughts are flooded and overflowing with precious memories, too many for a short writing piece. In my family, several generations were/are in Bais Rivkah. In addition to me, my mother taught there and my daughters and granddaughters attended and attend Bais Rivkah. I chose to tell here about some recent happening, as an interesting continuation of my past teaching in Bais Rivkah.

The school year 1966–1967 was beginning. I was not long out of school and looking for a job. The principal of Bais Rivkah offered me a position teaching a class of elementary school girls who, since they had attended public school before, would need extra instruction in their Judaic studies, while for secular studies they would be in their usual grade. Our very caring and devoted principal, Rabbi Majeski, created this class (see sidebar). I was delighted to take on this job and, with Hashem's help, it was a major success. The girls were learning a great deal and progressing nicely in their Yiddishkeit. I taught this class for several years and then took on such a class in the high school.

I would like to tell you about one of my former students, Merle Rivkah Meisel, now Levy, in the elementary

department, who was a very bright girl. I remember her mother visiting school and speaking with pride about her daughter's accomplishments. She was in my class from the beginning of my teaching career until December 1969, when her studies at Bais Rivkah were interrupted as her family moved to California.

Merle was not forgotten. I kept in touch with her with an occasional phone call, shmurah matzah sent to her from NY for Pesach, a New Year card, etc.

The years moved on. BH I got married and was busy with a growing family, and Merle also got married and was busy with her family, but we kept in touch - a phone call once in a while, now emails more often. The New Year greetings kept coming, the shmurah matzah arriving for Pesach.

This year, my daughter-in-law—also a Bais Rivkah alumna, and a shlucha in Long Island, NY—was working on a project to encourage people to put mezuzos on their doorposts, a worldwide campaign to spread mitzvah mezuzah. I sent this student of mine, Merle, now living with her husband and family in Sparks, Nevada, an email with a copy of the flyer about mezuzah and offered to get her some mezuzos for her home. I offered to arrange for someone to bring them to her and help attach them. She agreed.



*Chaya Kramer and her daughter-in-law, Chanie (Halberstam) Kramer, shlucha in Merrick, NY who was working on the mezuzah project*

Next step, I had to find that someone to take care of what I promised, and I did the best thing anyone can do when in need of some Jewish help in a far-off place—look up Chabad. I found that the Cunins in Reno, NV live not far from the Levy family, so I contacted Mrs. Sarah Cunin. She and her husband quickly got to work. They got the mezuzos and visited the Levy family, and mezuzos went up wherever needed in their home.

The Cunins discovered that Mrs. Levy is a Bais Rivkah alumna, and we discovered that this shlucha, Sarah Cunin, is too. We also discovered that Sarah was in the same grade as my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Chanie Kramer, who also was a student and teacher in Bais Rivkah, who distributed the mezuzah flyer that got this all moving!

We may have attended Bais Rivkah as students and/or teachers for a little while or many years, and we can be in Australia or Brazil or China or NY or some tiny town in Nevada, but Bais Rivkah has become a part of us, and we feel connected to one another with the values, goals, and teachings we absorbed while in Bais Rivkah. We feel united with each other in everything we have in common, all that is important for Jewish girls and women, to continue the life of our mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and all the generations before us.

This article is prepared by us three—Sarah, Merle, and me. Our names share something in common between us and with Bais Rivkah. Mrs. Cunin’s name is Sarah and Merle’s and mine include the name Rivkah, as does Bais Rivkah. These are the names of the first two great matriarchs of our people, Sarah and Rivkah, who merited that their Shabbos lights lasted all week as an everlasting holy light. In Bais Rivkah each of us was taught and imbued with the light of Torah and mitzvos. It does not stop when walking out of the halls of Bais Rivkah, but we are so privileged to always carry with us this everlasting light wherever we go, bringing it into our homes and spreading it into our surroundings, and lighting up the world everywhere!

---

Merle (Meisel) Levy



*Merle Levy Certificate*

Up until the fall of 1966, I was a student in public school—P.S. 298 on Glenmore Avenue in Brownsville, which was a short walk from home. It was also a short walk from Bais Rivkah’s original Stone Avenue building.

That fall, my curriculum—actually, my life—changed. My parents enrolled me in the 6th grade at Bais Rivkah. I wanted to go there to learn Hebrew and Yiddish, as well as study Chumash. My earliest memories of my first days include the giant laminated benching sheets after lunch, tiny five- and six-year-old girls fighting for the chance to help me up the endless staircase (I had orthopedic issues that made the stairs more challenging for me than they should have been), and Morah Hodokov (now Kramer). She was more than my Judaic studies teacher. She was my guide into the fabric of Bais Rivkah.

The class Morah taught was like “the little red schoolhouse” I remembered from old Western movies. Our ages ranged from nine or ten all the way to sixteen. Some of us had no rapport with Judaism, while others (like me) had a Jewish homelife with many rituals but



*L to R Sheva Cunin, Pinny Cunin, Sarah Cunin, Merle Levy, Rabbi Mendel Cunin, Donny Levy*

no literacy. I had such a sense of delight when I'd sound out Yiddish words that I heard and understood but never saw in print. One of the first things I wanted to do was read **דער פארווערטס**, my Bubby's favorite newspaper.

When Bais Rivkah moved to Flatbush, my daily trip to school went from around the corner to a three-bus commute. Because the trip was long, and my mother was worried about me, she accompanied me on the commute. It wasn't long before she began volunteering in the office. I learned about volunteerism by watching my mother.

When I graduated from Bais Rivkah's elementary school, I overheard my mother's cousin whisper to her, "That diploma is at least half yours." Some kids would have objected to that remark, but I knew this wasn't a reference to my academic accomplishments. Without my mother's dedication to getting me up when my body refused to cooperate, taking the three buses to Flatbush with me, and staying there as a volunteer every day, the academic accomplishments would have never been realized.

In December 1969, my father got a job in Los Angeles. The company offered to pay for our transportation and relocation. By then, I was a freshman in Bais Rivkah's high school and still Morah's student in our little-red-schoolhouse program. Although I was excited to move to California, I regretted having to leave Morah and my Bais Rivkah family. Of course, my friends and I promised to write each other. (Long distance phone calls were out of the question in the 1960s, unless there was a wedding or a funeral.) Morah also promised to stay in touch with us. Every friend I had eventually lost interest in being a penpal, except for Morah. She continued to write, call, and now email. Morah's gift of shmurah matzah is a solid connection that spans the miles and the years. Her



*Rabbi Mendel Cunin and Donny Levy put up mezuzos on the Levy's house.*

most recent gift of mezuzos on every doorpost of our home is more than a connection because her intent was to make sure our home was protected. I think my mother might be looking down on us with tears of happiness.

We started out as teacher and student but became more than that over the years. We never lost touch with each other! ■



*Photo of Rabbi Majeski, Principal of Bais Rivkah, in his Office. The year is 1955.*

*Mrs. Chana Lipskier, beloved secretary in BRHS, writes about her father, Rabbi Majeski:*

*This is the dedication the graduating class wrote for my father the year he passed away:*

*"We dedicate this yearbook in memory of our principal, Rabbi J. Majeski, who, with his warmth, devotion, and leadership, helped mold the character of true Bnos Yisroel for over two decades."*

*It is a true description of who he was.*

*Rabbi Majeski's emphasis was on instilling in his students yiras shomayim, midos tovos, and Hiskashrus to the Rebbe. Bais Rivkah was his life, and he would consistently write a duch to the Rebbe outlining everything that was happening in the school.*

*He knew every student personally,-not just their background, but also how to relate to them.*

*Rabbi Majeski was a figure often seen in the hallways and classrooms, as he tested girls on what they learned and gave money to girls who otherwise could not buy something from the vending machine.*

*He loved his work and dedicated all his time and energy to Bais Rivkah, causing him to be loved and respected by students and teachers alike.*

# ***GUILT-FREE LIVING***

---

Rivky (Elishevitz) Wilansky  
Graduating Class of 2005

I love the story of the Rebbe telling Dr. Weinreb from Maryland that sometimes, "One has to speak to himself," because that means that it's completely normal and healthy to talk to yourself. In fact, it's a helpful tool because we already have all the answers within.

So that's mostly what this column is - a conversation between Me, Myself, and I. While it is in question-answer format, I am really speaking to myself out loud. I'm happy to let you eavesdrop, just as long as you don't judge.

I alternate between feeling guilty that I'm not spending enough time with my kids, and feeling guilty that I'm not spending enough time on other stuff, or most often, that I'm not doing enough of either.

By other stuff I mean everything - not preparing enough for my classes, not planning more events, not having enough guests, missing all kinds of simchas, forgetting to give gifts, almost never sending Shabbos food to new moms, not organizing my house, ignoring people's messages, not keeping in touch enough with family/friends/mekuravos, missing davening or Chitas, not keeping up with other personal hachlatos, not writing enough, not spending enough time on self care... the list goes on and on!

I know it's not realistic to do it all, but I'm not sure how to get rid of that nagging guilty voice that keeps popping up countless times a day. How can I make peace with that endless list of "I shoulds," with everything that I'm not getting to?

Signed,  
Always Feeling Guilty

Dear Always Feeling Guilty,

Welcome to the club! Trust me, I feel you! While the list might not be exactly the same for each of us, we are all really good at feeling that we're not good enough! We are constantly feeling tugged in so many directions, and it's just impossible to do it all!

Being a mother is already way more than a full-time job in itself. We say yes to someone or something else often; of course we're going to feel guilty that we're not spending enough time with our kids...

While there's no way to get rid of that voice completely, (and we wouldn't even want to, because totally losing our guilty conscience would be pretty scary!), the good news is that we don't have to listen to that voice! In our days, it is 99.99% of the time the trick of the Yetzer Hara, no matter how "holy" it may sound! Its only goal is to make us feel discouraged or depressed and give up even trying!

So instead, we can talk back!

If we honestly believe it's true that we made a wrong choice and are guilty of something, we can say:

"It's ok, I'm human, and I made a mistake! But who will gain by me feeling guilty now? Nobody! One positive action is worth more than 1,000 sighs! So the only question is, how can I grow from this mistake? What have I learned? How can I make it up to my kids or whoever else it was?"

"Whatever already happened was Hashgacha Pratis, even if it was my own fault, because now if I choose to, I can use this step backward to motivate me to grow two steps

forward - to the point that it becomes a good thing!"

But most of the time, if we're honest with ourselves, we realize that's it's not even true that we made the wrong choice! That guilt is not a humble voice, but actually a really arrogant one, that is frustrated that we are not Superwoman - that we can't be in two places at the same time, and can't do two things at the same time.

To that voice we can say:

"No! I should not have \_\_\_(fill in the blank). The proof is that, from experience, had I chosen the other option I would feel just as guilty or more! I AM NOT MEANT TO BE EVERYTHING TO EVERYBODY ALL THE TIME! I just need to do the right thing, and Hashem will worry about the rest. Hashem has many messengers."

If that's too hard to accept as is, you can try this paradigm shift that I learned from Mrs. Sara Kaplan, which shows that when we make the right choice, we are actually benefiting everybody. For example, when we say no to Shlichus requests and explain that it's because our family needs us - we are teaching our communities the greatest lesson in Chinuch. And when we say no to our kids because (someone in) our community needs us - we are teaching our kids the greatest lesson in Ahavas Yisroel. And the same applies to any other right decision. With this perspective, instead of feeling that we lose either way, we can feel it's always a win-win.

The greatest example of this that comes to mind is that of Rebbetzin Chana, the Mother of Royalty. The fact that she was so heavily involved in heading the committees to help the refugees during the 1st World War did not in any way take away from the Rebbe's holy chinuch! On the contrary, it was specifically this complete and amazing devotion to

helping the Jews in need that made the greatest impression on the Rebbe and remained etched in the Rebbe's memory for all the days of his life.

The only condition Mrs. Kaplan gives is that we need to find the right balance.

Just as we need to take turns between our right foot and our left foot in order to stay on the middle path, we need to find the right healthy balance for our own families. And by healthy balance, she means that we need to keep checking up on the barometer of simcha in our homes - that of our spouses, our children, and ourselves. If somebody

## **THAT GUILT IS NOT A HUMBLE VOICE, BUT ACTUALLY A REALLY ARROGANT ONE, THAT IS FRUSTRATED THAT WE ARE NOT SUPERWOMAN**

in the family is starting to feel a bit resentful about our "outreach" because they feel their own needs are going unmet, that's a clear sign that it's time to switch our focus to "in-reach."

And again, even if we realize that we veered too far in one direction, there's still no gain in feeling guilty! It just means it's time to shift to the other foot, and step by step, we'll be balanced again very soon.

But of course, the best cure of all is prevention.

Instead of needing to deal with guilt once it comes up, we can gain confidence in our decisions from the start by being proactive. And that's where my mashpia comes in.

Every time I'm in doubt about a decision and afraid I'll feel guilty whether I say yes or no, I hold off my answer until I hear back from my mashpia. This way, if she suggests that I say yes, I take it on with pleasure and confidence, without doubting myself about why I agreed. If she suggests that I say no, I kindly but confidently decline the request, without letting myself feel guilty! And if she says that either way is ok, I know that I can make that decision myself with the assurance that whichever choice I make is 100% fine!

(If it's a decision that involves my husband, she asks, "What does your husband say?" and then she (almost) always supports it. My marriage is the most important, so how can I ever feel guilty for putting his preference first?)

Having a mashpia to consult with takes a huge weight and responsibility off me. And the greatest advantage is that besides for being an objective opinion, it's a channel to receive guidance from the Rebbe himself.

After that, if I still feel guilty about a decision I made with her input, I know that it's a complete ploy of the Yetzer Hara because I have no reason to feel guilty. I won't even answer to that! I'm doing exactly what Hashem wants!

P.S. I know what some of you are thinking: "Good for you, but I don't have a mashpia."

I urge you to ask anyone to be your mashpia. Literally, anyone is better than no one! (Provided that they have the right hashkafa, of course.) If you don't trust anyone, choose the one that you distrust the least. You can always switch when you find a more compatible option. Wishing you lots of luck! ■



*A  
FAMILIAR  
FACE*

---

Mrs. Shana (Itkin) Tiechtel, Principal of BRHS  
Graduating class of 1964

Written by Sharona Kuperman  
Grade 11

\*Names have been changed.

**D**o you ever walk down a street, and everything looks the same as always, but something is very different? I have had a number of such experiences.

On Fifth Avenue, I saw the usual pedestrians, each immersed in his own thoughts; the children returning from school, struggling with their heavy book bags; the drivers waiting impatiently for the traffic lights to change. Yet today, something was very different.

In Yerushalayim, approaching the Kosel, I anticipated that special moment when I could touch the holy stones. I felt embraced by the Kedusha. But this time, there was an added dimension that made this visit so much more meaningful.

The wedding hall was beautifully decorated, the Kallah was glowing, and the dancing was spirited. Suddenly, my smile broadened and I felt a special sense of joy.

What was it that changed the typical street scene from the ordinary to something special? What was it that greatly enhanced my Kosel and wedding experiences?

To put it most simply, it was one of YOU. The difference in each of these occasions was my sudden sighting of a Bais Rivkah girl.

In Manhattan, it was a girl who had attended BRHS many years ago. I probably would not have recognized her had she not come over and asked, "Hello, are you Mrs. Tiechtel?"

"Yes, I am," I answered.

She continued, "Do you remember me? I was a student at your school thirty years ago, and I'll never forget you."

When I heard her accent, I remembered who she was - Sophia\*, one of the Russian girls who came with the Russian refugee influx in the early '90s.

Then she added, "Do you know what else I remember? I once came into your office while you were on the phone. When I started talking to you, you pressed "do not disturb" on the phone. I felt so happy, so good, as if nothing was more important to you right then than talking to me."

At that moment, I recalled the incident as if it happened just yesterday. The unhappy Russian refugee student, sharing her concerns, doubts, and fears. And once again, like that day so long ago, we hugged and reminisced.

As I stood by the Kosel, as always mesmerized by the holiness of that special place, I heard a voice calling my name. "Morah Tiechtel! Morah Tiechtel!" I recognized her immediately. It was Eliana\*. She was in her early thirties,

not yet married, and had attended our school. I even remembered at which desk she sat. Eliana was not from Crown Heights, but she

*I feel embraced by the past, so proud of the present, and hopeful for the future.*

was a Bais Rivkah student. I recalled that it was a difficult adjustment for her to transfer from another school and enroll in Bais Rivkah - and how proud we were of her as she gradually became a true Bais Rivkah girl.

In the midst of dancing at the wedding, I felt a light tap on my shoulder, and there was Rochel\*. She was my student when I taught first grade. She definitely did not look the same, but she still had that twinkle in her eye. When I taught her, I was not much older than a high school girl and had almost no teaching experience. I wondered if I had made any impact upon her and if she recalled anything from that year. Rochel's reply really surprised me. She told me that one day in class she was so distraught because another child had scribbled on her backpack. The next day I gave her a brand new, bright pink briefcase. I honestly didn't recall this incident at all, but she remembered it all these years.

In each of these scenarios, something special occurred that added a new dimension to the experience: I met a Bais Rivkah alumna.

Imagine how I felt when I walked into the Kinus Hashluchos banquet a few weeks ago, and I was surrounded by hundreds of Shluchos who were Bais Rivkah alumni. Some may have graduated twenty or thirty years ago, others sat on the school's shul benches just a short five years ago. Some live across the world,

others just a few miles away; yet they all share one common denominator. Whether on Snyder Ave. or Crown St., Eastern Parkway or Lefferts, they were all students in Bais Rivkah. Actually, that is an inaccurate statement. It should not have been stated in the past tense but rather in the present; It's not that they were part of Bais Rivkah, in past tense, but they are part of Bais Rivkah today. To use a cliché (and clichés are only clichés because of the truth they hold) - "You can take a girl out of Bais Rivkah but you can't take Bais Rivkah out of a girl."

What is it about Bais Rivkah that makes it so unique? Every student has ups and downs. There are days when everything seems wonderful; the student feels appreciated by teachers, embraced by friends and validated by principals. There are also days that seem kind of dark and cloudy when challenges multiply. Yet, you were able to rise above all obstacles. There were and are countless dedicated teachers and principals who view Chinuch as their Shlichus in the Rebbe's Mossad. You and I are part of this school, established by the Friediker Rebbe and under the Nesius of the Rebbe.

This fact changes it all. As the Rebbe said to Temimim in 1952 by Birchas Habonim: איר זייט דאך אין דעם רביניס ישיבה, A loving father bestows his blessings upon his children; the Rebbe expressed countless brochos to his Kinder in Bais Rivkah.

One of the most difficult days in school, maybe the most difficult day, was Monday after Gimmel Tammuz 5754. I can still recall it like yesterday. I remember standing in the corridor; it was a Regents day. The students were told that they had the option of taking the Regent as scheduled or in August. One student, with bitter tears, between sobs, in a broken voice, said, "I don't mean to be chutzpadik, and please don't take it that way - but how can you even think we can take the regent today? You - your life was set already, the Rebbe gave you personal instructions on what your shlichus is. The Rebbe gave you direction, you had all the guidance that you needed and wanted. Yes, it's hard for you now, but you're an adult, you know who you are and you know where you're going. But me?! I haven't even started my life yet! I have so many roads to travel; I

have so many crossroads to pass, so many decisions to make, and this happens. How can I even think of taking a Regent?"

I had no reply, as truly the future looked bleak and hopeless. Yet, these very same girls, as well as those of you born after Gimmel Tammuz, had to traverse new paths. You reached adulthood, you faced many new challenges, you encountered numerous obstacles, yet you follow the Rebbe's teachings as your guiding light.

The Rebbe stated that the mission statement of Bais Rivkah is to educate students to be candles and bring light to themselves and to others. You take to heart the Rebbe's message. Whether you are directing a Chabad House somewhere across the world or dedicating yourself to Chinuch work around the corner. Whether you are an Akeres Habayis right here in Crown Heights or live a continent away, you continue to be part of the Rebbe's living legacy. You strive to be the candle that brings light and warmth to your family and community.

One common characteristic that Bais Rivkah students share is the desire for personal growth and progress. Yes, the pressures and demands of daily life, and even the mundane routines, at times fog our vision and obscure our ideals. I am proud to say that ultimately each and every one of you strive to make tomorrow better than today. Whether through learning a word of Chassidus, going on Mivtzoim, teaching a child, connecting to Hakodosh Boruch Hu thru Tefilla, or reaching out to a classmate with whom you've lost touch, each of you strives for a better future.

When I meet a Bais Rivkah girl (she may be a grandmother, but to me, she is that girl who sat in the second row by the window), it feels like there is a fresh breeze and a fountain of sparkling water. I feel embraced by the past, so proud of the present, and hopeful for the future.

I say Hodu laHashem ki tov because what could be a greater zechus than getting to know thousands of students like YOU in the Rebbe's Mossad. After all, you are the Rebbe's Kinder.

I am confident that you will be at the forefront, as together we will greet Moshiach. ■

MARK J. NUSSBAUM  
& ASSOCIATES<sup>PLLC</sup>  

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ATTORNEYS AT LAW

SERVING THE  
CROWN HEIGHTS  
COMMUNITY FOR  
OVER 10 YEARS  
WITH A SMILE

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# THE COMMITTED MARRIAGE

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Devora (Geisinsky) Krasnianski  
 Graduating class of 1988

The nature of the problem is unknown, but the simple solution is universal. Simple, though not necessarily easy.

In particular in his case one needs to take into consideration the impact the relationship between them [husband and wife] has on their children- may they live- and by taking to heart the great value of the matters, then certainly when he will meditate he will find the appropriate ways to bring the peace into actuality and Hashem, Blessed be He will grant him success.

With blessing. Waiting for good tidings.

*(אגרות קודש vol 8 pg 210)*

The Rebbe is encouraging a new mindset which is the foundation of a healthy Shalom Bayis, especially since Shalom Bayis directly impacts the children. Shalom Bayis is not a set of techniques or words or gifts. It all starts from a mindset - how you think, your beliefs, and your priorities. Shalom Bayis is the recognition that family life is the most important priority and purpose in life.

Your actions and words all flow from your mindset. Your behavior is the product of your thoughts. The success of your marriage and your children starts with you.

While there are many important factors that contribute to a well-functioning family - love, trust, respect, giving, flexibility, humility, patience, and selflessness to name a few- most important is commitment. The dedication of each spouse to family life. To do whatever it takes to make the marriage work.

Commitment means that although there are going to be many times when you're just not going to get your way, you are nonetheless OK with it and you genuinely appreciate that you are strengthening your relationship.

Commitment is an all-encompassing decision. To always be respectful. To delete negativity. To shut off the phone when your spouse needs you. To laugh together. To be fully present when in each other's presence.

Marriage is synonymous with healthy Torah priorities.

Commitment means even when it is hard. Even if it gets in the way of your happiness.

Does your happiness matter?

Yes. Of course. But not as much as doing what is right for your family.





SHALOM BAYIS IS THE RECOGNITION THAT  
FAMILY LIFE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT  
PRIORITY AND PURPOSE IN LIFE

” A better question might be, “Will this help the success of my family?” or, as I sometimes say, “Will this lead to the ‘adai ad’ [eternity] of my marriage?”

Will being ‘right’ bring more success to family life?

There’s that famous adage, “Would you rather be right or be happy?” Even that is a misnomer. Happiness is not the end all. You don’t need to be right and you don’t need to be happy. After all, you can be happy by selfishly ignoring life’s responsibilities (that is, until it catches up with you). Life is about the greater family unit.

You will be happy that you gave the best that you can give to your spouse, to your family, to your children. Knowing your children received the best. That’s real happiness.

In an English letter (published in *The Letter & The Spirit* Vol. 1 pg. 411) the Rebbe writes to a mother:

“Moreover, and of course this is also most essential, since G-d has blessed you with children, good children, who require the attention, love, and upbringing of both parents, and these children are surely entitled to receive what is due to them from their parents - there can be no shadow of a doubt that each of you should do everything possible not to strain the relationship further, but on the contrary, both of you must try to strengthen it and restore it to full harmony.”

The Rebbe is teaching us priorities. Your children are the top priority.

Your preferred way of parenting may be a good one. However, if it comes with the insistence of it being “your way” it cannot achieve your desired results. The anxiety caused by the rift in the family causes more damage than the parenting methods.

Respect between parents is more important than the best parenting techniques. Children are ‘apprenticed’ into the ways of the adults around them. They pick up words, attitudes, interactions, and mindsets. They learn how to respect themselves and others, how to express gratitude, and how to express displeasure, how to respond when something goes not according to expectations. They learn it all from their parents.

Commitment includes seeing the world from your spouse’s perspective even when it makes no sense to you – at all. Commitment means putting your family ahead of yourself, your ‘rightness’ and your happiness.

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*Devora Krasnianski is the founder of Adai Ad ([www.adaiad.org](http://www.adaiad.org)) whose programs provide the necessary tools and insights for a strong and successful marriage – starting with pre-shidduchim, continuing through*

**PLEASE NOTE: An abusive marriage needs guidance from a רב מומחה בשלום בית, a Rov with experience in Shalom Bayis. • [www.adaiad.org/end-the-abuse](http://www.adaiad.org/end-the-abuse)**

# BEING PRESENT WITH OUR CHILDREN

## *The Gift of Connection*

Estee (Goldberg) Lieblich  
Graduating class of 1999

Many of us are physically present with our children from the time they come home from school until they go to bed. We spend so much time with our children each day, speaking to them, feeding, bathing and caring for them. Unfortunately, being emotionally present for even a few minutes daily has become a real challenge for parents in our day and age. Most of the time we are distracted, either by the demands of our busy lives, or by our smartphones, or simply because our minds are preoccupied. The price we pay is that our children feel unseen and unheard because our attention is elsewhere.

In order for our children to be a Keili to receive the chinuch we work so hard to impart, they need to feel a strong, deep connection with us. Relationships are built on connecting, and our children crave our connection. Our undivided attention is an absolute necessity to build strong relationships with our children.

How can we remedy this? Here are some tips for how we can be more present with our children, encourage them to share more with us, and deepen our connection with them in a way that is both practical and truly fills their need for connection.

### **1. GIVE YOUR CHILDREN 100% OF YOUR NON-DISTRACTED ATTENTION FOR 2-5 MINUTES A FEW TIMES A DAY**

Give your children 100% of your non-distracted attention for 2 to 5 minutes a few times a day. The goal is to spend this time with them for a few minutes each day truly connecting to them, without any expectations of them at all: without expecting them to perform for you by being cute or smart or funny, without praising them and even without chatting with them. Just sit quietly near your child and be in her presence with your full attention. You can simply sit next to her and observe her play, or ruffle her hair, rub her back, or hold her hand. This sends them the message loud and clear: I enjoy being in your presence. I love being with you. I love and accept you for who you are.

### **2. STOP ASKING YOUR CHILDREN SO MANY QUESTIONS.**

When we speak with our children, we often end up dominating or in some way altering the course of the conversation. When children know that they can talk freely without our constant barrage of questions, they feel more comfortable sharing with us.

How do we do this? By just listening. Really listening, and then acknowledging that we have truly heard them: "Sounds like you had a long day!" "That sounds exciting!" "I'm sorry you had such a tough time today." "I'd love

IN ORDER FOR OUR CHILDREN TO BE A KEILI TO RECEIVE THE CHINUCH WE WORK SO HARD TO IMPART, THEY NEED TO FEEL A STRONG, DEEP CONNECTION WITH US.

”

to hear more about that.” “Hmm, I hear you..” “Oy that sounds upsetting/disappointing/frustrating.”

When our children share something with us about their day, and we are fully present by listening and acknowledging, they feel comfortable sharing more with us the next time.

### **3. DON'T GET TRIGGERED BY THE INFORMATION THEY SHARE.**

When our child shares an incident that happened with another child in the playground, or about their own misbehavior in school, just listen! When we use every opportunity to teach and lecture them, they quickly learn not to tell us about these things. Better to know what's going on in our child's life than to make them feel that it isn't worth it to share these things with us.

(Of course, if you feel that it's important, at a later time you can bring up the issue with your child and discuss better ways to navigate the situations in the future.)

### **4. INSTEAD OF ASKING THEM "HOW WAS YOUR DAY? ASK IF THEY WOULD LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR DAY.**

When children mumble a quick “BH fine,” we don't get to hear any more information about their day. By sharing about our own day, we model to our children what sharing and talking about our day sounds like, and in time they start to share more information with us. This three- to four-minute daily interaction is also a wonderful opportunity to teach them about real life experiences when we share with them some of our daily challenges and how we dealt with our emotions in healthy ways.

### **5. USE CARETAKING ACTIVITIES AS OPPORTUNITIES TO BOND WITH YOUR CHILDREN.**

Caretaking activities are the things we do multiple times a day to physically provide care for our children -- getting

them dressed, feeding them, diapering them, brushing their hair, putting them to sleep, etc. If you can be 100% emotionally present with your child for even just a few minutes during these times, this can be a special bonding time for the two of you in the midst of the everyday hustle and bustle of life. It requires us to slow down for those few minutes. By taking advantage of these times to connect with our children, we satisfy their need to be seen and heard throughout the day. The investment is small but the payoff is huge.

When our children know that they can hold our attention and our interest without having to ask for it or work for it, it creates a profound change in our relationship with them. It is so validating for children to feel seen and heard by their parents. By seeking opportunities to be fully present with them without any distractions, even for just a few minutes each day, we give our children the ultimate gift they crave: our undivided attention, which conveys our unconditional love and acceptance of them. By implementing these practices, our connection to our children will grow, and through that, we create a safe space for our children to share with us, which further deepens their connection with us and their ability to receive guidance from us. It only takes a few minutes a day of truly listening and being fully emotionally present with our children to give them, and ourselves, the gift of connection!

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*Estee Lieblich M.S. ED was a student of our graduating class of 1999. She lives in Crown Heights with her husband and 3 sons and works as an early childhood consultant and parent educator. Her latest project, SimLev, aims to help parents understand their children's temperaments so that they can foster a better relationship with their children and advocate for them in school.*

# CLEARING THE CLUTTER

Mushky (Dinerman) Mendelson  
Graduating class of 1999

Change is hard. Especially change that needs constant maintenance, such as organizing a house. As a professional organizer, I have found it important to focus on three key points to coach my clients in transforming their homes into organized spaces.

**Motivation:** Why is it important to keep an organized home? What is the driving force? Our Why is our daily reminder for what is important to us.

**Break it down:** How is it possible to follow a step-by-step process to accomplish the goals? Our How is our map, our guide. It is the steps we need to get to where we want to go because of our Why.

**Eye on the goal:** What is the end result? Our What is the goal, the mission, the milestone to reach and its deadline.

When we discover our Why it helps us determine How to do our What.

When obstacles reach us in our How (method), the Why (reason) is our guiding principles to overcome and persevere to our What (goal). While our Why always stays the same, the actual goals (What) and the method (How) may fluctuate.

The Friediker Rebbe writes in Klalei Chinuch V'hadracha that each stage of childhood has specific targeted goals and skills, changing Whats. For young children, the focus is on personal hygiene and modesty. This reinforces self-awareness, boundaries and personal space. In education, this is a fundamental foundation to build upon.

As the children grow, we encourage our children to learn to say Brachos, to learn Torah, respect parents, teachers, and elders. This expands their horizons with gratitude, impulse control, and following directions.

These important skills are paramount for being successful adults, because by the time a child reaches Bar/Bas Mitzvah age, they are expected to follow Torah and Mitzvahs B'Hidur. They need to have self-regulation and self-motivation to reach their What.

The journey to a decluttered home is discovering your Why to implement your How to reach your What. ■



## 10 organizing tips that can clue you in to making your house a home and in line with your Why:

- 1 Keep what you need or love.
- 2 Keep like objects together.
- 3 Keep items handy in the place they are most needed.
- 4 Have a dedicated parking space in your home for each item.
- 5 Allow your home to be 15 minutes away from being presentable.
- 6 Being neat or spotless is not part of being organized.
- 7 Get kids involved in donating toys, putting things away in bins, putting their clothes in their hamper etc.
- 8 Keeping sentimental objects limited, out of the way, is wonderful.
- 9 Donating items no longer needed or loved gives others a chance to love or use something.
- 10 Decluttering every season, take out what wasn't used, or is not needed.

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EARLY EDUCATION:  
WHY DO WE SEND  
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# ALUMNUS PER DECADE

Interviewed by Chaya'le Levin

Grade 11



**GRADUATE  
OF 1969**

## CHERNA (PINSON) LIGHT

**lives in Crown Heights** and is a devoted homemaker, editor of *The Spice and Spirit of Kosher Jewish Cooking*, and one of the presidents of the N'shei Chabad committee. N'shei U'bnos Chabad

enables women to be cognizant and in touch with their Hiskashrus to the Rebbe and to internalize the Rebbe's teachings. It empowers women as the pillar of their homes, and makes Chassidishe Yomim Tovim real by utilizing these significant days to uplift and inspire women in preparation for Moshiach.



**GRADUATE  
OF 1971**

## SARA (GANSBURG) LIEBERMAN

**lives in Crown Heights** and is a dedicated wife, mother, and brilliant teacher in Bais Rivkah, the school she loves. She is committed to do all it entails to live her life as a Lubavitcher Chossid.



**GRADUATE  
OF 1980**

## GOLDIE (SHEMTOV) PLOTKIN

**lives in Toronto** and is a dedicated shlucha who organizes women's shiurim and lectures all around the world on Taharas Hamishpacha, Emunah, and "Tracht Gut Vet Zein Gut." She also runs a Chabad

House and preschool. The once-fledgling Chabad House that began in her living room has BH upgraded to a building that can host thousands. Despite some people's disinterest upon her arrival, with the motto of L'chatchila Aribet, Goldie and her husband built their community up to a current 400 families that are actively involved with Chabad.



## GRADUATE OF 1999

### RIVKY (FRIEDMAN) KATZ

**lives in Crown Heights** and is commonly found surrounded by Seforim. Rivky's activities are constantly focused on the goal of spreading Chassidus. She passionately believes that we must learn how to express

Chassidus and verbalize its message in order to be successful Neiros Le'Hair. She organizes activities and classes for the public in her workplace, the Levi Yitzchak Library. Aside for the many events and farbengens held there, the Levi Yitzchok Library serves as a communal living room, a peaceful and safe environment where children can pull out a book from the well-stocked shelves, sit down and immerse themselves in a story.



## GRADUATE OF 2000

### ROCHIE (LEBOVIC) KOROLITZKY

**lives in Crown Heights** and serves as one of the committed members on the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Bikur Cholim all-volunteer board, which is comprised of many Bais Rivkah Alumni. Bikur Cholim of

Crown Heights was started many years ago and upon the Rebbe's request, was named after the Rebbetzin. Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Bikur Cholim is dedicated to helping those with the challenges of illness during their trying times and beyond. Rochie and her team ensure that the patients and their families' every need is met- from homemade meals to rides to appointments, medical support to household help, and hospital visits. The Bikur Cholim committee has arranged life-saving helicopter rides for patients, and even arranged beauty care for women whose bodies are ravaged by illness. Rochie values bringing joy to the family by sending them toy packages, birthday gifts, and arranging for singers or performers to lift their spirits. The special memories of extravagant Simchas and special events that are arranged for young parents who are extremely ill are a gift that so many families are forever grateful for.



## GRADUATE OF 2011

### ZELDY (NEMANOV) FRIEDMAN

**lives in Crown Heights** and is a devoted Chassidus teacher. "It's so fulfilling to see your students learning and applying- seeing the girls feeling proud for achieving levels they never thought they could reach,"

shares Zeldy. In line with her passion for learning and imparting this love to others, Zeldy is very involved in and serves as a scholar in residence for the Batsheva Learning Center- a place for women and girls to learn inside, gain skills, and make learning real. It empowers women and helps equip them with the skills to open up a sefer, tackle the texts and understand them, removing the misconception that in-depth learning is exclusive to men.

# What is your source of inspiration and motivation in your life and specific shlichus?

The Rebbe. In addition to spearheading N'shei Ubnos Chabad, I am an editor for the legendary Lubavitch cookbook, *The Spice and Spirit of Kosher Jewish Cooking*, of which the Rebbe was very supportive, helping and guiding us along the way. I feel that my connection to the Rebbe is so strong because I got to see and speak to the Rebbe. It is also strengthened now as I continue to learn his sichos.



The Rebbe's sichos, letters, and maamarim. The example of my parents and many others in my life, such as my teachers and principals throughout the years, and those involved in Hafatzos Hamayanos.



I became a teacher, as I have always loved to learn and teach. I enjoy learning from my students and taking home a wide range of lessons in character, knowledge, and dealing with challenges every day. The Rebbe's discussions related to Chinuch constantly continue to inspire me and push me forward.

I went to the Rebbe's farbrengens frequently, and the Rebbe made us so passionate about shlichus, instilling within us that it is the way to bring Moshiach. Channeling the malleability of teenagers, the Rebbe made it exciting and gave us a koch for shlichus- everyone wanted to be a shlucha! I went with friends to Minnesota to run a camp for shluchim with my friends. We were surrounded by so many role models who were shluchim, and we used to sneak into Rabbi Manis Friedman's classes and stay until four o'clock in the morning! It made a massive impression on me. Each and every one of my friends who were there with me became a shlucha!

Being that I teach a lot of Chassidus classes, I am constantly preparing. That is when I learn the most! When you learn, you connect to the Rebbe, which causes a real change in you. The heart reflects what the mind knows. My children are also a source of inspiration. They teach me so much! To see my children living my dream is so motivational.



Watching and hearing the Chassidus classes and listening to the questions and answers of others truly inspires me.

My specific shlichus turned out B'Hashgacha Protis. We were looking for shlichus and nothing was working out. While we were waiting, we decided to do something for the community. I brought my uncle, Rabbi Manis Friedman, to Crown Heights to give some classes and teach Chassidus. We organized classes in the Levi Yitzchok Library, and they were very powerful. The 11th grade from Bais Rivkah came for a class and they decided to come back another two times. One of the girls told me that the first class she sat uninterested in the back. The second time she got more interested. The third time she sat right in front, asked questions, got answers, and it really affected and opened her up. She decided to go to seminary and her life changed from those classes. We realized that with the effect we had here, we had found our shlichus in Crown Heights. I understood that the place you will be happy in is the place where you are most needed.



First and foremost, the four beautiful children Hashem blessed me with. I hope they learn to make the most of each day and to always be there for another Jew. I truly believe the best way to spend each day we are blessed with is by helping other Yidden. Boruch Hashem, while Bikur Cholim is my 24/7 shlichus I'm also involved in many other causes. I give out chizzuk packages to women with pregnancy or infant loss, help several of the leading Jewish organizations in Crown Heights, and oversee the kids program in our shul so that the children have a positive shul experience. I am also on the board of the PTA in some of my children's schools. I am very passionate about chinuch and raising children who are very proud of their Yiddishkeit. While we have BH implemented many beautiful things in the yeshivah, I am most proud of our chessed program. The boys have been involved in packaging food for the poor, making Chanukah packages for children of Jewish inmates, and learning to appreciate Hashem's beautiful world. We are also working on an inclusion program and many other projects for the boys to live Ahavas Yisroel. My drive to join Bikur Cholim in specific was seeing a friend of my husband, a Shliach, as he dealt with a terrible illness. Despite his circumstances he remained so upbeat, pushing himself out of bed to have a Shabbos meal with his children, and making the most of every day. When he passed away, I got involved in the newly reignited Bikur Cholim.

The Rebbe and all the Chassidus that I learned. My love of learning. I want to instill that love in my students.



# What was a deterrent in your path and how did you overcome it?

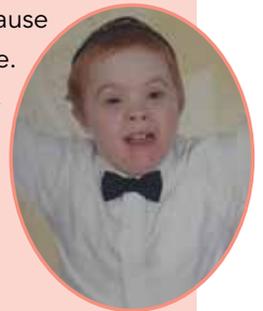
When I was newly married my mother passed away. I wrote to the Rebbe a lot and learned to accept that everything Hashem does is good, even though we don't understand it. My friends kept in contact with me and were a very good support system; we kept the chayus in each other's lives.



*“Chassidus helps us thrive instead of just survive.”*

When I gave birth to a special needs son, Zalmy, it was very challenging in the beginning- we were numb. We had Emunah but in our sechel. Learning Perek Chof Vov in Tanya gave me strength. My husband, a big Talmid Chochom, and I were a team together. The Rebbe always spoke about having a mashpia and this really helped me too. There are two ways one can fall: on bare ground, which can be fatal, or falling down on a safety net, which allows you to get up and walk away easily. Chassidus is our safety net which gives us a new perspective.

Zalmy was a big part of our community. When Zalmy was niftar, we struggled very much. A woman came to a lecture I was giving and she asked me why I was wearing lipstick. She went on saying that her son passed away too, and she can barely get out of bed! I realized that it's all because of Chassidus. Chassidus helps us thrive instead of just survive. When you live with Chassidus, it gets you out of everything. This was my foundation in high school. There can be hard concepts, but once internalized, Chassidus can help you get out of bed and put on lipstick! These are the coping mechanisms that Bais Rivkah gave to us!



An inspiring story about Zalmy: Before a Sheva Brachos, we sent Zalmy with a babysitter to play on the gym and slides that he loved in the back of Burger King. When my husband went to pick him up, he didn't have his phone on him to contact the babysitter. He didn't want to walk into Burger King so he decided to go around to the glass wall where he can signal for Zalmy to come out. Zalmy didn't see him, so he had no other choice but to enter the store. My husband ran inside, and standing there was a girl we hadn't seen in 20 years! Her mother had become frum, yet this girl was totally against Yiddishkeit and converted, marrying a Christian. And there she was, sitting with her five children. She saw my husband and said, "Rabbi, what are you doing here?!" My husband was thrilled to see the girl we had been trying to reach for so long. Overcome with emotion, the girl explained that she had just been thinking, "What is a Jewish mother doing here eating non-Kosher right before Pesach?! How lost am I?" She had asked Hashem to give her a sign that He wants her back. That instant my husband came running in to get Zalmy. Now, this woman's son had a bris at age fourteen, goes to a Lubavitcher Yeshiva and is a full-fledged Yeshiva bochur! All this happened because of Zalmy...



Lack of time, time management, and the difficulties in some days that make one feel down. Although not an easy feat, my tip in overcoming obstacles as Yidden and Chassidim is exercising the focus on Hashgacha Pratis and Bitachon. Speaking to caring and understanding people, a mashpia and the like, always helps. Knowing that good and truth will ultimately prevail is a great motivating force. Trust in Hashem is the way of our forefathers and is a great tool to utilize through trying times.

The expectation of going on shlichus and letting go of that. Realizing that it's not up to me to decide where I'm needed. You have to make yourself available to Hashem and the Rebbe. It's not about where you want to be needed, but rather where you actually are needed.



When I first wanted to teach, I was scared I'd fail at it. I was scared I wouldn't be able to control the class, and that I wouldn't be able to teach them effectively. I decided to do it anyway because it's a shlichus. I'm not doing it for myself, I'm doing it for the Rebbe. I have a passion and I want to share it.

## How did Bais Rivkah shape you?

It gave me my foundation and a dedication for shlichus.



Bais Rivkah set a very strong foundation for me. Besides for the knowledge I learned, I was taught how to be mentch and have respect for others. Bais Rivkah inspired my goals and achievements and gave me so much chayus for Chassidishkeit.



Bais Rivkah gave me a solid foundation to be able to learn and understand everything I need to know as a Jewish woman. It gave me the tools and desire to live in the way I was taught.



Bais Rivkah helped enhance and develop the inspiration to fulfill the values and principles established at home- what is a Jewish life and a Jewish home, what is expected of a Jewish girl and especially a Bas Chabad. Within its walls I explored the value of learning, the insights of Chassidus to help develop all of the above, having good friends, how to treat another Yid, and how to reach out to others.

Bais Rivkah had a monumental effect on my life. The teachers set goals for me: shlichus and teaching others. I lived in a golden era when there were many farbrengens, and we were immersed in the Rebbe's teachings and clear guidance. Whenever the Rebbe would come downstairs for Mincha, everyone left school together and ran to see the Rebbe. I would say that 75% of my friends went on shlichus. We have annual reunions until this day, thirty eight years after we graduated! Bais Rivkah gave us that koch for Chassidishkeit. We had a teacher who gave a Tanya shiur every morning before class, and we all woke up 45 minutes early to go to those shiurim. We had such motivation to have Hiskashrus. My whole foundation to lead this life of shlichus was given to me in Bais Rivkah High School, where you learn to inspire and teach others, and internalize Chassidus.



The constant message of being proud of who we are as Yidden and Chassidim and that we are on shlichus wherever we are. Tzivos Hashem, chidon study, celebrating the chassidische Yomim Tovim and of course the beauty of Torah and mitzvos are all things we BH raise our children with. We have also found multiple ways to be on shlichus here in Crown Heights.

There was something about production finale that still strikes a chord with me today. The combination of the unity of the girls, the Bais Rivkah and Lubavitch pride is really special. Between my sisters and nieces I have attended many productions after graduating and I get emotional during each finale

## What is your message for alumni and current Bais Rivkah students?

Don't be needy, be needed. The world is depending on you to share everything you are learning in school with them! Hashem's depending on it!



Learn as much as possible, and never stop. Don't wait for people to come "feed" you; take control and responsibility for your own learning and knowledge. The knowledge you gain through learning is your only support, and it will get you through life.

Foremost, to internalize the values and teachings we received in Bais Rivkah. Strengthen your Hiskashrus with the Rebbe and find opportunities to reach out and create achdus. Be there for each other! Look to grow in the ways of Chassidus. Moshiach now!



You are in a great place, a place built and guided by the Rebbe. You are the forerunners- you herald Moshiach by the Torah and Chassidus you learn and by the mitzvos you do. You lead by example- even when you don't realize it- and that is the power of Chassidus. Treasure your moments here, respect your parents, teachers, friends, and all whom you come into contact with. Be proud of who you are, always! Know that you can surmount all obstacles. Keep your eyes and hearts open to learn and do, and may Hashem be with you always!

Behave in school (personally, this wasn't my strong point). Take advantage of the learning and of the amazing staff! My teachers play a big role in who I am today. Everything you learn now will be magnified in your future. Your learning makes you who you are.



Put down your phones. Look at your friends as they talk to you, listen to your Bubby's stories intently, and notice Hashem's beautiful world as you walk down the street. The most beautiful things are up: trees, sunsets, our Zaidy's eyes. Let's take a step back and see that the most precious gifts are right in front of us. Nothing online can beat looking up to see the stars, our mother smiling at us, our spouse sharing about their day, our child sharing something that's been on their mind, or a friend sharing a good laugh. Time and life are too precious to

waste on phones. While waiting at the doctor, engage with the person next to you. Listen and learn while at a Shloshim or Yahrzeit event. Smile at a stranger as they walk by, notice the baby cooing at you, have fun with your friends and leave your phones at home. Let's look at people as they speak, let's hear what they have to say, let's validate them, create memories we can laugh at together. Instead of wasting our time reading about people's personal lives and comparing them to our own, let's make our personal lives as special as they can be. Let's take back our most prized possession, our time. Our time in this beautiful world, our time with our loved ones, our time to make a difference. I would share this same message with our mechanchos and parents: we are the role models of our children. Ultimately they will follow what we do, not what we say. During class, lunch, and outdoor time, let's be one hundred percent present. Every single child can benefit from a teacher who is truly present and listens intently as they speak. Let's say Tehillim and Hayom Yom from the sefer itself.

Lastly, in the communal work that I am involved in, I truly see what it means, "You don't know what goes on behind closed doors." Being sensitive to that fact can only benefit all children, especially those acting out due to all sorts of challenges at home.



# BAIS RIVKAH

## LEADS THE WAY FOR GENERATIONS

Esty Newfield  
Graduating class of 2008

Lights of all colors were flashing across the stage. The music was pounding. The auditorium was alive with excitement. On stage, I saw hundreds of beautiful young faces alight with enthusiasm. The jumbo screens displayed the lyrics of the Bais Rivkah production finale song. Each girl joined in as loudly as possible; no microphones needed! Another incredible production was coming to a close, and I was filled with renewed inspiration and pride in the achievements of the girls of Bais Rivkah.

As I looked across the stage and the rows and rows of members of the audience, I was thrilled to see so many of my current and former students. I had nachas watching the creativity and school spirit of the Bais Rivkah girls. The production was an opportunity for students, siblings, parents, and friends to join together and see what makes

Bais Rivkah so special. I remember that when I was a student in the production, Mrs. Miryam Swerdlov was the faculty advisor. Every year, she used to come onto the stage during the finale and proudly announce on the microphone, "... AND HERE IT IS! 500 GIRLS ON THE STAGE! YOU WON'T FIND THIS IN ANY OTHER SCHOOL! Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu!" As I slowly made my way to the exit, many of my former students came over to me eagerly saying, "Miss Newfield! Did you see me on stage?" It was my pleasure to congratulate them on a job well done.

The production is a high point of the Bais Rivkah school year. Like many other families in Crown Heights, my family has had a connection to Bais Rivkah over many, many school years. My mother taught at Bais Rivkah before she was married. The

five Newfield girls were students at Bais Rivkah continuously, for a span of over thirty years. It seems like every day we compared notes on activities and events at Bais Rivkah. At the supper table and on Shabbos we discussed Siddur and Chumash parties, mother and daughter teas, 7-11 meetings, Mrs. Samuels' Rebbeim scrapbook, Mrs. Strauss's family project, Chessed opportunities, Achos HaTmimim events, Mrs. Korf's mitzvot outings, production practices, Shabbatons, gemers, the teacher training program, etc. Now my nieces, Baila and Esther Malka Friedman, are Bais Rivkah High School students. I love hearing from them about how these same traditional Bais Rivkah activities are taking place again, empowering a new generation of students.



The connection to Bais Rivkah continues as my sister, Miriam, and I are both teachers in the elementary school. Working at Bais Rivkah is not merely a job. It is a shlichus. We teachers are committed to our mission, our students, and to each other. We are constantly working together to improve the presentation of our lessons and to support each other in and out of school. As a close-knit family, the staff shares in simchas and, chas v'shalom, the opposite.

My years in Bais Rivkah, as a student and a teacher, have molded my approach to many situations, large and small. During the recent mid-winter break, we went on a family outing for bowling and pizza. As it was also the yahrtzeit of my brother, Shimmy, my sisters and I did not hesitate to turn the lunch into a mini-rally. We seated my nieces and nephews around four tables joined together. In no time, the pizza shop was filled with the Twelve Pesukim. The children took turns reciting the pesukim and everyone repeated after them. My sisters and I are Bais Rivkah graduates; making the spontaneous rally seemed natural to us. We were proud to spread Torah at this impromptu opportunity because this was how we were trained.

The Bais Rivkah education begins with the first day of school. Mrs. Dina Bronstein once visited my 2nd-grade class. The girls were so excited when she told them that they were in "Mommy School." She explained that everything that they learn in Bais Rivkah will help them to be excellent mothers in the future. They will teach their children Aleph-Beis, davening, Chumash, Parsha, as well as the

halachos of Tznius, Kashrus, and Shabbos. The girls' eyes lit up as they imagined themselves as balabustas in their own homes. Some girls even volunteered that already now they are Mommy's best helpers. They hold the baby, peel vegetables, set the table, and say Shema at bedtime with their younger siblings.

**SCHOOL TRADITIONS ARE SO SPECIAL BECAUSE THEY STICK WITH THE STUDENTS AND REMIND THEM OF OUR MISSION**

In its unique way, Bais Rivkah connects one generation to the next. In honor of Yud Shvat, the yahrtzeit of Rebbetzin Rivkah for whom our school is named, the girls were taught the school theme song, "Proudly as one we stand, reaching forward hand in hand..." When they went home, the girls eagerly practiced the song. The next morning, one student burst into my classroom with the news, "Morah Newfield! Can you believe it? My mother also knew the song and joined in with me!" To her surprise, the next, and the next, and the next girl chimed in, "My mother also did!" School traditions are so special because they stick with the students and remind them of our mission. To quote the chorus, "Through mitzvot we'll bring light, spreading Torah and Yiddishkeit, the Rebbe leading l'adei ad, anu achim gam yachad..."

Very often, I see how my students identify with Bais Rivkah students from years ago. I



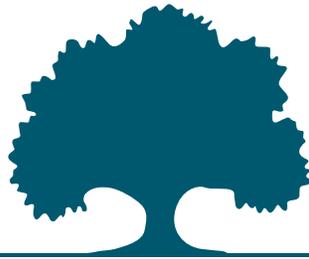
showed my class a video clip of girls going to the Rebbe for Sunday dollars. My students were so proud when they noticed that the children in the video were wearing Bais Rivkah Day Camp t-shirts. My class felt as if they also were receiving brachos directly from the Rebbe. The girls feel strongly connected to the Rebbe, even after Gimmel Tammuz.

One of the major turning points during the Rebbe's Nesius was when the judge ruled that the Rebbe's library must be returned to 770. Morah Dini Avichzer shared her memories as a 3rd-grade student of the historic first Hei Teves. She described the immense joy of the Chassidim on that day and the exuberant dancing that ensued. She recalled that after the Bais Rivkah girls danced in the auditorium, they returned to their classrooms to continue learning. The principal sent a duch to the Rebbe describing the girls' joyful celebration and how they used their chayus to learn afterward. The Rebbe was extremely pleased that the celebration did not halt their learning. Rather, it gave them a boost to learn with even more enthusiasm. As my students heard this story about the first Hei Teves in

Bais Rivkah, they cheered, "Yes! Yes! We did it!" Being Bais Rivkah students as well, they were sure that they were the ones who had given that nachas to the Rebbe.

An establishment of the Frierdiker Rebbe, Bais Rivkah was very dear to our Rebbe. Certainly, he gets tremendous nachas from seeing it expand and thrive. Last year, for the first time in a generation, the entire Bais Rivkah student body posed for a school photo. Rows and rows of bleachers and chairs were set up for this monumental occasion. Every student from preschool, elementary school, high school, and seminary assembled in the courtyard. The girls made brachos on the pekelach of nosh and gave coins to tzedakah. Two thousand one hundred students kein ayin hara recited the Twelve Pesukim in unison. Each girl surely felt proud and excited to be a part of this enormous assembly, seeing all of Bais Rivkah, the largest Lubavitch girls school in the world, standing together. Our success is testimony that Bais Rivkah is the connection between past and present, mothers and daughters, the Rebbe and the Chassidim, and our beloved students and their tremendous potential.

**WISHING ALL  
OF OUR ALUMNI  
A KOSHER AND  
FREILICHEN PESACH!**



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# Be My GUEST



*What no one ever taught you about having people over*

By Chava (Sneiderman) Witkes  
Graduating class of 2011

A Shabbos meal is that end-of-the-week experience that everything else revolves around. It's how we share values with our kids. It's a time that uplifts the six days to come. A Shabbos meal has the power to inspire others, bring people together and create community. But no one is born knowing how to run a Shabbos meal. Planning a menu, shopping, cooking - these are skills that must be learned. Keeping the conversation flowing, making guest feel comfortable? Even harder. It's been a few years of trial and error, and here's what I've learned (so far).



### *Say Yes*

“What can I bring?” your neighbor asks. WAIT! Before you send back the usual, “Don’t worry! Just come!” think twice. She wants to contribute. She’d be more than happy to bake something, pick up some challah or come early and make salads. If you tell her “nothing,” you know she’s just going to bring you wine or flowers, and you already have those things covered. Right? Right! To make hosting just a little easier, do yourself a favor and share what you really need.



### *Watch Your Wallet*

The point of hosting is not to show off your fabulous cooking skills. Keep your budget down and you’ll be that much more likely to host again soon. Skip the store-bought dips (\$4 tahini? No thanks.), and shop sales for a menu that won’t break the bank. I always plan my recipes around Empire Kosher’s specials (posted on their Instagram every Wednesday). Mushrooms are 99 cents? Go for a pâté or mushroom soup. Pie crusts half off? Make an easy quiche or pumpkin pie (and put an extra in your freezer for next week). Done and done. Your wallet will thank you. Your husband will thank you. And your guests will thank you (because they’ll be invited back that much sooner).



### *Your Freezer is Your Friend*

Ready to bake cookies? Triple batch time. There is never any reason not to make extra desserts, kugels, even dips. Pureed eggplant (pre-mayo), homemade hummus, matbucha, and pestos all keep beautifully. Store raw, shaped challah in the freezer and on Friday your house will smell like Gombo’s. (Are you a sourdough person? Bread refreshes perfectly if you run a loaf under cold water before heating it up—crisp on the outside, soft in the center.) At any given moment I have half a Shabbos menu in my freezer ready to go. So if we don’t get invited out by Thursday night, we can still pull off a pretty decent meal in a few hours after work on Friday.



### *Everyone in Their Place*

You know that inevitable awkward silence as people try to figure out where the host wants them to sit? And the hosts suddenly realize that they actually haven’t given the question much thought. “Oh, sit anywhere!” Sounds easy enough, but wouldn’t it be easier if everyone knew their place from the get-go? Place cards take tension off your back and ease the minds of your guests too. No more pressure to pick the “right” seat; just a laid-back, relaxed meal.



### *Let Me Introduce You to Room Temp*

It’s time to take back Shabbos day. People are usually nervous about hosting lunch, and while the traditional cholent is a nice minhag, there is so much more you can add to your menu. You know what serves up perfectly at room temperature? Medium-rare steak that you thinly slice (against the grain!) on Shabbos morning. (Slicing meat too early dries it out.) You know what else doesn’t need to be served piping hot? A colorful roasted veg board. Round it out with a pasta-salami salad and second course is done.



### *Warm Up the Crowd*

Even your closest childhood friend might feel a little uncomfortable at the start of a meal. Maybe she’s self-conscious about a new outfit she’s not sure about or maybe she’s just an introvert who always get a healthy dose of social anxiety before eating out. Maybe you’re on shlichus and your guests feel awkward with frum references or Hebrew songs. Either way, break the ice around the table with a light, fun game. You can go around and ask people to share something that inspired them that week. You’ll learn more about your guests, each person will get a chance to feel heard, and when everyone’s had a turn, the table conversation will feel that much more cohesive.

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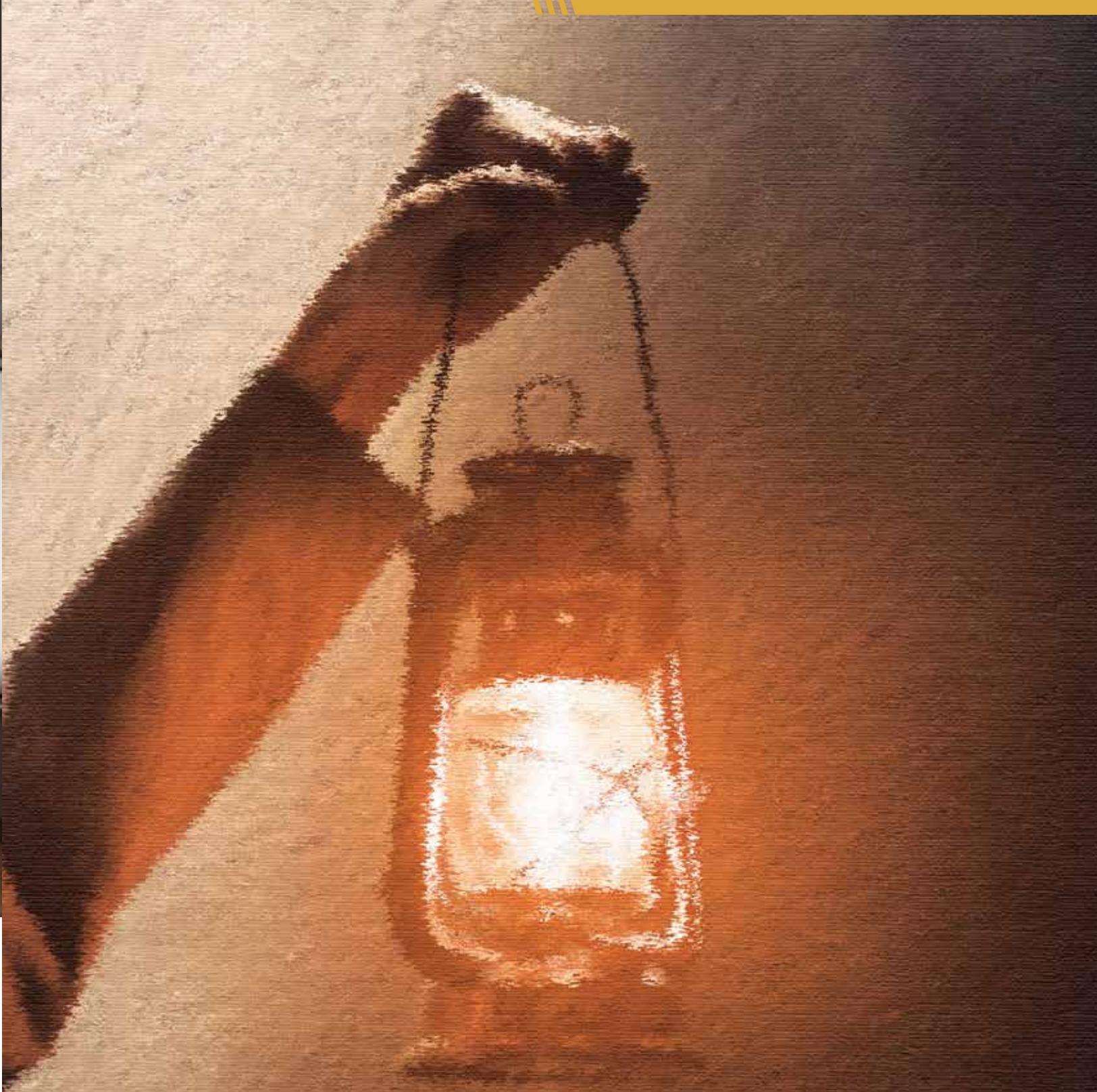


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“Raise the lamps until they light on their own”

# EDUCATION DAY USA

Nechama (Feldman) Shemtov

Graduating class of 1990

*In 1978, President Jimmy Carter initiated the practice that the Rebbe's birthday, Yud Alef Nissan, is marked annually by each sitting President as "Education and Sharing Day U.S.A."*

*How did this tradition evolve? Who was involved in making it happen?*

*At the epicenter of U.S. affairs, amidst the politicians, diplomats and dignitaries in Washington, D.C., an elegant building marked "American Friends of Lubavitch" has the answers.*

*Mrs. Nechama Shemtov, Shlucha to Washington D.C. and alumna of Bais Rivkah Seminary, graciously agreed to share with us some thoughts about her fascinating life on Shlichus and her family's involvement in the founding of Education Day U.S.A.*

**Embrace: Where did you grow up, and when did you come to Bais Rivkah?**

NS: I grew up on Shlichus in Sydney, Australia. My parents were sent there in 5727(1967)

to establish Chabad. I attended elementary school in Sydney and then, as Sydney did not yet have a Chabad high school, I left home to go to Beth Rivkah in Melbourne, Australia. I continued on to Ohel Chana Seminary in Australia, which was an incredible experience. As I was young for my grade, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to go to New York and complete another two years of seminary in Bais Rivkah.

**Embrace: What's your fondest memory of your time in Bais Rivkah seminary?**

NS: I absolutely loved being at Bais Rivkah, and I have so many fond memories! It may sound cliché, but when I think of my time at BR, my immediate association is Simcha and Chayus.

Some memories— the Seminary dormitory opposite 770 that gave us immediate proximity to Farbrengens and dollars, Rabbi



Donald Trump signed and issued a proclamation recognizing Education and Sharing Day

*The ability to influence and impact matters on a global level is a truly humbling notion and one we are constantly mindful of.*

Wolberg's Tanya class, which was fascinating in its clarity and depth; Rabbi Mangel's talk on faith during the Holocaust, which still inspires me to this day; the Jewish Expo at the Javits Center that we all worked on, the distinct honor of representing BR at the Nshei Convention in Arizona and the BY convention in Detroit. I could go on and on! The most overwhelmingly positive piece was meeting, and subsequently befriending, so many other Lubavitcher girls—many from places almost as far away as I was—and seeing how Bais Rivkah brought us together by imbuing within us a love for Chassidus and a passion to fulfill and share the Rebbe's mission.

**Embrace: How did you end up on Shlichus in D.C.?**

NS: My husband had been working in D.C. as a bochor, helping his father, Rabbi Avraham Shemtov, whom the Rebbe had directed personally and even publicly regarding his shlichus in Washington. After we were married, when we were ready to embark on our life's mission of shlichus, we submitted our options to the Rebbe. The Rebbe gave us a Brocha specifically for Washington, DC as our place of shlichus.

**Embrace: How do you feel your education in Bais Rivka affected your life and Shlichus?**

NS: My education in Bais Rivka was crucial to my life on Shlichus. Growing up, Shlichus was something I was immensely proud of, though I sometimes found it challenging. Bais Rivkah helped reinforce the Hashkofa, foundations, knowledge and confidence that I would need in order to deal with the larger world in the course of my Shlichus./

**Embrace: What makes Shlichus in Washington, D.C. different than other places of Shlichus?**

NS: Every Makom HaShlichus has its own unique aspects. Being that we are in the Nation's Capital, in addition to our local community, we interact with some of the most potentially influential people in the world. The ability to influence and impact matters on a global level is a truly humbling notion and one we are constantly mindful of.

**Embrace: What are the hardest and best parts of being on Shlichus in D.C.?**

NS: For many years, the hardest part for me was being so far away from my parents and siblings—all of whom (other than one on Shlichus in South Africa) are on Shlichus in Australia. Most of my husband's family is on Shlichus around the world as well. Not being able to share Yomim Tovim and even Simchas with immediate family was definitely a challenge.

It is also challenging to be in a very transient community, where people

frequently move in and out as the political climate changes, and subsequently their careers. Or, as they BH get married, have children and grow in their Yiddishkeit, they relocate to the suburbs, where real estate is considerably more affordable, and the community resources are more accessible. Our younger children are frequently saying goodbye to their Shabbos playdates, and we are regularly bidding farewell to many friends who have become like family. As a result of the above, we have to constantly create our community anew.

However, everything in life can be viewed (at least) two ways. What we find challenging also has its advantages. Most likely it is a result of our immediate family's physical distance that we formed unusually close relationships with many who became our "family by choice". Our children also developed an ease with adults, sophisticated conversations, and adjustment to new and evolving situations.

And, finally, while we sadly see community members leave—to the suburbs or to fulfill positions internationally—we are constantly meeting so many new people with fascinating careers and life stories. Building new relationships imbues our Shlichus with a vibrancy and energy that doesn't allow it—or us!—to become stagnant. BH, through our numerous friendships, Shabbos dinners, classes and Peulos, we are blessed to see the ripple effect of Chabad's mission.



*Rabbi and Mrs Shemtov with President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump*

**Embrace:** Every year, since President Jimmy Carter, the Rebbe’s birthday, Yud Alef Nissan, has been marked as “Education and Sharing Day U.S.A.”

**Can you tell us a little bit about how it came to happen, and who was involved? Who wanted it to come about and why?**

NS: In 5738 (1978) the Rebbe declared the “Year of Education”. My father in law, the Rebbe’s shliach to Washington, worked diligently to organize that the President would sign a Proclamation designating Yud Alef Nissan as “Education Day, USA”. Every year since, the President has issued such a Proclamation, which was amended by President Reagan to be called “Education and Sharing Day, USA”. Each President usually welcomes a delegation at least once during his presidency to be present as he signs the Proclamation in the Oval Office at The White House. The Rebbe strongly encouraged that Education Day be proclaimed by as many governmental bodies

as possible; and last year, in honor of the 40th anniversary of “Education and Sharing Day, USA”, a successful effort was undertaken to have the Governors of all 50 states issue such Proclamations as well, something rather rare! But the team of yungerleit and bochurim who undertook this initiative, together with my husband, worked tirelessly, and they got it done!

**Embrace: Does anything actually happen on Education Day, or is it just symbolic?**

NS: That depends on each location. Some have actual events and programs, while others simply issue the Proclamation and urge entities to use the day to focus on the importance of education, which is what the Rebbe wanted. When the US Department of Education was established separate from Health and Human Services (it used to be the Department of Health, Education and Welfare), the Rebbe vigorously supported the idea, because he felt that establishing the separate department was an

expression by the government of the added importance of the issue. In fact, at one of our events here honoring the Rebbe, the US Secretary of Education at the time said in his speech, “In some way, I guess I owe him my job.”

**Embrace: What does education mean to you? And what message should we be educating the next generation with?**

NS: Education signifies empowerment. It is only through our own education that we develop the tools to be able to grow, teach, and share insights with others which can potentially change viewpoints, and ultimately lives. In order to do that, one needs to be informed and educated about the issues that they, and the people they interact with, are interested in. The Rebbe always stressed that education is more than the accumulation of knowledge; it is the building of character. Ultimately, as Shluchos we are being approached for guidance and advice from a Torah and Chassidic perspective, and the more educated we are in this way, the more receptive people become. At the same time, we must constantly be mindful to express our viewpoints B’darcei Noam U’bdarchei Sholom—positively, with compassion and sensitivity.

So my message is—empower yourself through education. If you’re still in school, make the most of your time! If you have the ability to go to seminary—do so! If you are further along in life, it’s never too late to advance in your learning. ■

# *FAN THE FLAME OF IDEALISM*

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Rivkah Katz

Graduating class of 2016

*H*ave you ever walked into a room, only to have the reason why you came slip your mind as you cross the threshold? I do that all the time. There is a biophysical protocol I undergo in these moments—squinting eyes, map lines forming from my forehead creases, and an arrhythmic heartbeat mirroring my confusion.

The same thing happened when I joined a project recently. Mid-way through, I felt like I was forgetting something. I was slightly discombobulated and lost in a room of thought. *What was the point of this?* I wondered. *Why was I doing it?* I mulled over why I was occupying my mind with such existential questions, only to realize that in truth I was perturbed by a different thought. I refined my question. *What is the point of me investing myself in this project—after all, what's in it for me?*

No more existential crisis, on to bigger and better—a self-entitlement conundrum.

At least now I knew what I was looking for in the room, but the search to find it wasn't over just yet.

We people were crafted to toil and do. While once the ambition to be proactive and go was common, a new wind of thought is gusting through, chilling our attitudes. There were days when organizations had to give volunteers a number to get in line; there were multitudes of outstretched arms. Gan Izzy's rejected counselor groups because they had an overload of applicants. Nowadays, camps struggle to staff their overflowing camper applicants. We stand cross-armed and posh. Before volunteering to join the Rebbe's shlichus, we share a five worded thought that rearranges the framework: "What's in it for me?"

Because, hey, we are humans with a sweet tooth for instant gratification. Our cravings synchronize with our growth—Tanya proven. The later the generation, the more Self we feel. We're allowing ourselves to be lost in this m a l a d a p t i v e notion.

Our idealism has been jaded and what was once shining silver is now tarnished with the residue of doubt. After all, why am I investing countless hours into a volunteer project? What IS in it for me?

It's a mitzvah to guard our souls and look out for ourselves, yet there's a fine line between self-care and selfishness. What happened to the balance of giving without fixating on the profit? Where has our idealism gone—the will to pursue acts of altruism because they are our inherent truth and to do what's right simply because it is right?

The power of youth has been tainted with self and entitlement. "I can, but what am I getting in return?" I work so long as the payroll wires.

*Where has our idealism gone—the will to pursue acts of altruism because they are our inherent truth and to do what's right simply because it is right?*

We overlook the part of us that makes our lives divine. The ability to grab onto it, to draw the authenticity into our reality—that is what's in it for us. And bringing the truth down takes toil.

Improvement starts at home. In order to raise children imbued with idealistic values, we must begin with ourselves. Reframing our outlook has two components: oiling the wheels of our train of thought and revitalizing our habits. When life revolves around me, any service is a means to an end—a self-serving reward. If we reroute our thoughts, we realize that the end is embedded in the means. Our simple act of goodness contains the inherent reward—and is the means to achieve it.

The waters of Torah reflect this: "עץ חיים היא"—She is a tree of life. " However, there is a prerequisite for Torah to invigorate you with its life infusing powers. The possuk continues, "למחזיקים בה"—For those who cleave to her." You can only grasp the truth if you are invested in the process of finding it. When you immerse yourself in a good deed without looking for any extrinsic motives and you are rewarded with the ultimate truth.

As I rummage through the inventory, I'm relieved to find what I came into the room for. I've been holding my breath all this time. And as I peer out the window, I realize that I've found what I thought we'd lost. Blaring lights and bellowing sirens are gaining presence. The muffles of a radio fuzz in my ears. A Hatzalah van, with a committed volunteer, is speeding down the road to help a stranger.

There's a message from a friend who lives on a lone island because she committed to being a beacon of light to her community, no matter how far from her friends that takes her.

There are teachers and educators whose mind space is occupied, but never fully booked—always available for the needs of their students, simply because they care.

The blustering winds don't feel frigid any more. The warmth is accumulating. There's an idealistic front approaching. There's hope for our children.

What's in it for me? Authentic goodness. ■

# A CHASSIDIC EDUCATION RUNS THROUGH HIS VEINS

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Mrs. Ella (Chitrik) Lerman

Graduating class of 1980

*We* got the diagnosis on Chof Zayin Teves at 9 p.m. A new anniversary—the day we found out that my husband has cancer.

We rushed home from the doctor's office, and the first thing we wanted to do was go to the Rebbe's Ohel. The older kids were grocery shopping for Shabbos. I called them, and they left the shopping carts, half full, in the aisles and rushed back home. Not a good way to tell your kids that their father is very sick, but I panicked.

I could not stop crying.

Leaving the Ohel, my husband turned to me and said, "Please, no more crying," and the crying stopped.

Now, a year later, sitting in the hospital with him, I understand what he was asking me to do.

Currently, I am part of a Tanya group. We finish the whole Tanya every day. After forty days we start a new cycle, and I get a new perek to say.

Waiting for test results, I now study my new perek, Likkutei Amarim perek yud beis, with my husband.

כי המוח שליט על הלב בתולדתו וטבע יצירתו שכך נוצר האדם  
"בתולדתו," The brain rules over the heart, for that is how we are created from birth." The mind naturally and automatically governs the heart because, as the Alter Rebbe explains, that is how we are created.

At the Ohel, my husband was using everything he is as a Chasid, having grown up in a Chasidishe home, to dictate his response to his illness. He was in a time of crisis, and he needed **דגדלות**, the real mental work it takes to transcend hardship. His strength was summoned by adversity.

The Alter Rebbe quotes Shlomo Hamelech, "וראיתי שיש"  
"כיתרון החכמה מן הסכלות האור מן החושך," And then I saw that wisdom surpasses folly as light surpasses darkness."

Why do we need this analogy? Isn't it clearly understood that wisdom is greater than foolishness?

This analogy teaches us something new. Just as a little bit of light can suddenly, when lit, remove the darkness, so too, even a little bit of wisdom can remove the kelipah of the shtus.

The Alter Rebbe assures us further, "שמעט אור גשמי דוחה הרבה מן החושך" "Even a little bit of light can dispel the darkness, naturally and automatically."

The sechel of a Yid who learns Torah and Chassidus naturally and effortlessly changes who he is. His Yiras Shamayim is real. His cognitive powers are relevant to how he responds to his illness.

The Frierdiker Rebbe says in Likkutei Dibburim that learning Chassidus must make one into a Chossid with Chassidishe middos, otherwise, it is just called chochmah.

My husband's positive attitude and exceptional middos are directed by his mind.

In Birchos Hashachar we say every morning, "אזור ישראל" "Hashem gives us strength." That strength cloaks us in the splendor that is recognized by all. The next bracha is "עוטר ישראל בתפארה," "We are crowned with glory."

Doctors, nurses, family, and friends all ask my husband the same question: "How are you feeling? You look great!"

Of course he does. His intellect governs his emotions. He sits up straight, smiles through the pain, and is cordial to everyone who meets him. No self-pity, no complaining, just pure faith that we can get through this with dignity and that things are going to get better.

His learning and education create a superior human, a prince.

He never asks for help; he tries to do almost everything he's done before and puts up a good front. He has driven long distances, and taken flights as well, in order not to disappoint his kids.

Shabbos in the hospital, he slowly puts on his hat, kapoteh, and gartel to make Kiddush. No shortcuts.

In the hospital, at a low point, I heard him say for the first time, "I need to krechzt (sigh, moan) a little." I sat down near him and said, "OK, I'm listening." He laughed and that was that.



One Shabbos afternoon he came home from shul in a lot of pain. I asked him what happened. He told me how he had met his uncle whilst walking home. Immediately, he straightened his back and began walking at his normal pace so that his uncle would not notice that anything was amiss. All this so others would not experience pain.

He focuses on the positive, telling stories of Rebbeim and Chassidim with enjoyment, pleasure, and a lot of pride. His happiness is contagious. This is who we are, this is who we come from,

and this is how we behave. Time and circumstances have not changed that.

Every Shabbos and Yom Tov is met with excitement. We've had guests at our Shabbos table who asked me if he is always so animated when talking about the parsha. What simcha he has in being a Jew.

In perek chof vov of Likkutei Amarim, another one of the perakim in Tanya I've said for forty days, the Alter Rebbe teaches us why Shlomo Hamelech uses the analogy of light and darkness for happiness and sadness. "שיש לשמחה זו יתרון כיתרון האור מן החשך דוקא."

The great advantage joy has over sadness is compared to the light that comes davka from the darkness. Light can only be seen when you've experienced darkness first. So it is with happiness that comes after sadness. Great is the joy that we experience when we recognize the Chasdei Hashem and the Hashgacha Pratis in everything we do.

My new avodah, my new challenge, is to be genuinely happy. I am working on making it real. I am getting good at pushing worrying thoughts out of the way. The Tzemach Tzedek said, "Tracht gut vet zein gut." Think good and it will be good. Bitachon, absolute trust that Hashem will make things good, is the vessel that brings down Hashem's blessings. The mere exercise of thinking positively will bring good results. I am awaiting good news!

Continuing on, כולו טוב. שאת וביתר עוז

# *FROM THE BIRTH OF MY FIRST CHILD TO THE BIRTH OF GEULA*

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Aidel (Blau) Zaklos

Graduating class of 1999

## **At Our Best**

The walls of Golus are crumbling around us. We stand at the brink of Kabbalas HaTorah once again, anticipating the birth of a new era, the receiving of the "Torah Chadasha" from Moshiach.

As Bais Rivkah girls, we were passionately educated that it's up to us to bring Moshiach. We learned that when Hashem gave the Torah to Bnei Yisroel, He first commanded the women and then the men, showing how in the merit of women and girls the men also received the Torah. We were raised with the gift of knowing that we are a reincarnation of the Nashim Tzidkoniyyos who brought about the Geula from Mitzrayim. Each of us Nshei U'Bnos Chabad are needed to get involved and help with the final push. Yet, at times, the labor pains are really intense and challenging.

## **Our Army**

We know that, along with the responsibility, we were granted the strength and tools to fulfill the purpose of creation. Fortunately, we were given

the very best coach, our Rebbe, together with an army of helpers, the Tzivos Hashem. Our salvation has always come about through the children. It is in the merit of today's children, who guard the Torah and make sure it will stay pure, that we will be successful in our task and see our Rebbe very soon.

When we educate our children properly, they can be relied upon. It is women who have the responsibility to ensure that children stay pure and focused! We are zoche to raise these powerful neshamos, born in the darkest times sent to help us in the last final moments of Galus to bring about the greatest light. **הם ונירשא** ונקלה בוט. By following the Chinuch guidance we have received from the Rebbe we will be marching to the Geula and be able to say to our Rebbe, "ונלדגש סילודיג האר", see these children who are mekushar to you and have helped win **ה תמחלמ'**

Starting with the birth of my first child, I felt guided with essential lessons on how to educate a neshama to fulfill its purpose, to take part in helping birth the Geula.

### The Urgency

In the final month of my pregnancy, it seemed that my baby's growth was constricted and time was of essence. After standing on line at the Ohel for 2 hours, I davened that she should just be born already, healthy. Just hours later, on Gimmel Tammuz, I held a beautiful, 5 lb 3 oz girl, delivered naturally 2 weeks early. I realized we had experienced a taste of Geula. We wonder,

Moshiach is so overdue- does a moment sooner really matter? Why the emphasis and urgency to bring Geula a moment sooner? When we look at the bigger picture it makes sense. Hashem and all his myriad Malachim are

*People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care.*

waiting in Galus together with us, suffering the same pain as us. All previous generations of Yidden and all Jews alive today have had enough. Time is of essence and we must do everything in our power to bring the Geula even one moment sooner. Therein was **Chinuch Lesson 1: Let's not be complacent with the Galus state that our children are being raised in.** Let's daven and demand that Moshiach come NOW. As parents, we will do anything for our children. Our children are constricted; they deserve a better world, far greater even than the one we experienced in the pre-Gimmel Tammuz era.

### In His Care

Giving birth to a soul selected to be born on Gimmel Tammuz, I felt humbled and undeserving. Born the day after the last day of school, my final day in the Bais Rivkah 7th grade classroom, I attributed this gift to my ten years of devotion to

the chinuch of the Rebbe's children, in the Frierdiker Rebbe's Mossad. That was my **Chinuch Lesson 2: Showing our children that when we help Hashem's children, Hashem takes care of ours.** My goal in chinuch has always been for my child to go beyond herself and think about Hashem and others. The best example we can set for our children is making another's needs as important as our own. My shlichus of continuing to educate the many **תינוקות and תינוקות של רבן,** **תינוקות,** would not end with the birth of my own biological child. In fact, it was clear that Mussia was sent to teach me to deepen my love for each of Hashem's only children, as precious to him as a child born to parents who have waited very long. What wouldn't a parent do for his only child? Whatever we made for Mussia- be it a customized chassidische siddur, beautiful items for a **ה צבאות ה,** personalized mission charts, chassidische playlists and stories, a full Jewish Library, a Shabbos candle lighting video at age three- included the goal to share with all of Hashem's children. We know that Moshiach will come when **לכשיפוצו מעינתך חוצה.** The greatest satisfaction is knowing that through these efforts we reached over 100,000 people.

### Undiscerning Connection

To date, the most powerful influence Mussia has had on me is **Chinuch Lesson 3: We need to set an example for our children of connecting with every Yid, precisely because of how different he may be.** One Friday

afternoon, while playing in our yard with her guests who came for Shabbos, Mussia fractured her “fib” and “tib”- two bones in her leg. Hashem helped us recognize that this happened a mere few days after her relationship with two friends had broken. Then, we walked into the emergency room and the two nurses taking care of us had the same names as these two friends. Incredibly, the doctor was Jewish, and his Hebrew name was Aharon Noach. Our shlichus was clear. We put much effort to repair the relationships and were BH immediately rewarded. Mussia’s leg miraculously healed, without surgery.

When Mussia was in pain, I was able to imagine the pain that Hashem must feel when any of his children is broken. We know that even if only one Jew had not been at Har Sinai, Hashem would not have given us, not even Moshe, the Torah. I know I have been granted the special talent of bringing people together, as it is women who bring about achdus within the family, the community, and Knesses Yisroel. A woman is not only the Akeres Habayis of her own home, but of Hashem’s home, this entire world. My job is to ensure that every Jew in my reach feels wanted and needed to keep them connected. In preparation for Moshiach, I need to repair the fractures that come to my attention. I need to serve as an example for my friends and family beyond the mere tolerance of people. I need to find the asset in others’ differences and let them know how valued they are

(not despite their differences, but because they are different). People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care. To truly prepare others to receive Torah, I need to first learn to unite with these women as one.

Simultaneously, I also learned **Chinuch Lesson 4: Our children deserve their own connection to the Rebbe.** On the Shabbos before Mussia was scheduled to take x-rays that would determine if she would need surgery or would walk freely without a cast, she shared some concerns she had with me. When I suggested that we would write to the Rebbe after Shabbos, she asked to open a volume of Igros Kodesh right then. In the letter we opened to, the Rebbe writes, “I received your letter from Yud Gimmel Tishrei...” Words can hardly describe how moved Mussia was, as that Shabbos was Yud Gimmel Tishrei. There was immediate relief. The Rebbe went on to write that positive thinking

*Staying connected to the Rebbe will bring our children hope and joy, so needed in today’s times.*

would bring about positive results. She knew she would be okay. While I could’ve told her to think positive, her seeing through our Rebbe that

Hashem knew of her challenge and was holding her hand, made it easy to think positively. As she laid on the x-ray table the nurse reminded her, “Smile—the picture comes out better.” She did smile, and the outcome was better than the doctors had even hoped for. They dismissed her saying they never need to see her again BH. Staying connected to the Rebbe will bring our children hope and joy, so needed in today’s times.

Today, just a few months shy of her 10th birthday, the dividends of these lessons have paid off. She is our right hand at spreading Yiddishkeit to the children in our family and community in so many creative ways, that she initiates and carries through on her own. She runs classes for our own children and children of our community every Friday and Sunday when there is no school. She shares her knowledge of the Sefer Hamitzvos she learns for the Chidon with a class of women who adore her and continue coming weekly to listen to her. She has the tools to kindly bring her classmates together in unison, or explain why she leaves after Limmudei Kodesh to continue learning Torah at home, or why she doesn’t eat certain foods, or why her parents are building a mikvah when her community is rather small. As I watch her with pride, I daven that her purity of mind soon be filled not only with dreams of Moshiach but of the actualization of it and that her audience soon consists of many more students, young and old who hunger for knowledge of Hashem! ■

# PARSHA PEGS

*Teaching with creativity*

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Chana Devorah (Bogomilsky) Feldman

Graduating class of 2008



*F*or a few years, I ran a playgroup for two-year-olds in my home. For the first few months, things were going along smoothly. Problems began, however, right after Tishrei when I began to teach parsha. I knew I had to use visuals to keep the kids engaged. I don't know how to draw freehand and even if I did, I didn't have a whiteboard handy in my home. I did have a lot of toys and mentchies, and I did know how to use them to reenact the parsha story, so that's exactly what I did. But then I had a new problem. My mentchies didn't look like the people from the parsha! And why was the same Zeidy Mitzvah Kinder mentchie Avraham one week, Yitzchak another week, and in other weeks suddenly reappearing as Yakov, Moshe, and Aharon?!? Besides being confusing to my students, that's not what they looked like! I was frustrated about the lack of parsha people in the Jewish toy market.

Then I heard about the idea of painting solid wood peg dolls and I toyed with the idea of using them to create new characters for the parsha. I wondered how someone can paint on something so tiny. I also remembered: I don't even draw! But I figured I'd give it a try, and to my pleasant surprise, both children and adults loved my attempts at creating 3D people from the parsha! More importantly, my lessons were clicking with my students, and their parents were shocked at how well their two-year-olds knew the story. I realized that other people can benefit from my experiment, so I opened



my Etsy shop, [parshapegs.etsy.com](https://parshapegs.etsy.com). Ever since then, teaching parsha has become my passion and I have realized some fascinating things about this subject.

Picture the scene: Playtime is over, the toys are away and now the children are on the carpet for circle time. Everyone is seated in their spot, their faces are turned towards Morah, and with shining eyes, they are listening to her as she is teaching them. To the casual observer, it may seem that the children are only learning new knowledge and information. In actuality, what they are learning is so much more than that.

### The Love of Learning

At the root of it, the overall objective in teaching parsha is to instill Ahavas HaTorah and Ahavas Hashem in the children. Everything we know we learned in kindergarten. Yes, the children are learning and having fun through creative centers and projects, teaching them that learning is exciting. Every school, nay every teacher, has their flavor on how they like to teach parsha. No matter **what** is being said, the most important thing is **how** it's being said. Children are intuitive and pick up on every nuance. So when Morah is speaking joyfully to the children and with a smile, the children are learning how exciting it is to learn Torah and how much Hashem loves them.

### Communication

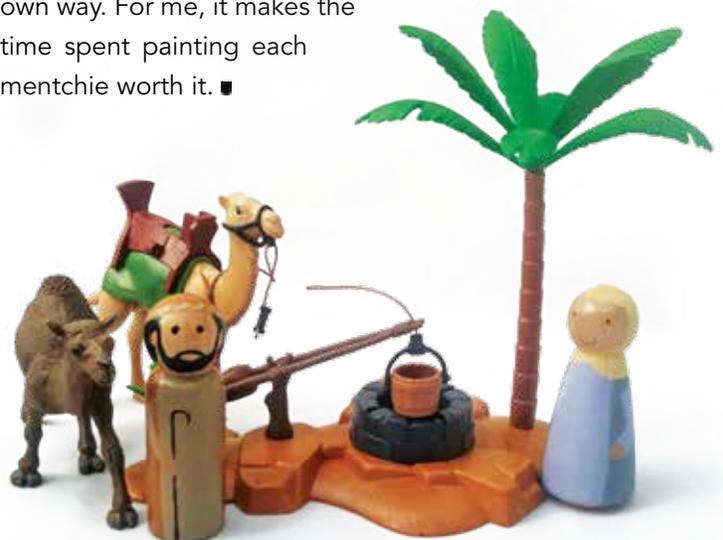
There are also practical lessons from Parsha Pegs. As much as the endless electronic social media platforms try to dominate our interactions, language and speech will always be the medium that really connects us. As Morah is dramatically telling the story by changing her inflection, using different voices, or making different

facial expressions, she is teaching the children the powerful skill of public speaking and communication. They are learning how to captivate their audience to tell the stories they will want to share.

### How to Play

Play is the language of children; toys are their words. Therapists agree that toys are an effective way to connect to children and teach a lesson. This may sound surprising, but sometimes children need to be taught how to play. The basket of mentchies that is dumped all over the floor, or worse, languishing on the shelf, is probably because the child doesn't know how to play with it. What better time to teach them how to play than at circle time when they're anyway hearing a story? And as they're watching Morah move the mentchies around, they are also absorbing social-emotional skills. Avram was in a dilemma about what to do about Sarai. Eisav was angry at Yaakov. The Yidden were scared because they were trapped at the Yam Suf. (For the record, my Parsha Pegs never languish. Children love to be able to put to words the stories they know with my Parsha Pegs.)

Whenever there's a notification about a new sale in my shop, I get a little tingle in my body. I know that my product will be dumped on the floor and thrown around. The truth is that I'm okay with that. My peg dolls are durable and strong enough to handle any rough treatment. I know that the pegs will be loved and reused again and again as the child retells parsha the way Morah taught it but in their own words and in their own way. For me, it makes the time spent painting each mentchie worth it. ■



# FAR FROM HOME

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Mrs. Chanie (Spalter) Nemes

Graduating class of 1986

By Feiga Khutoretsky

Grade 10

As much as shlichus is a rewarding life, it comes with its diverse challenges. The struggles vary for each Shlucha—leaving behind family, the lack of kosher food, or the loneliness of living in an isolated community.

Mrs. Chanie Nemes, Shlucha to New Orleans, Louisiana, shared her experience with us, giving a glimpse into one difficult aspect that many Shluchim deal with: sending children away from home for their chinuch.

When the young Nemes family moved to New Orleans in (1990) תשנ"א, many of the difficulties were expected. A hurdle that Mrs. Nemes had not anticipated, though, was that she would have to send her children away from home. "It's the most difficult part of our shlichus," she said. When they moved down with their oldest daughter, then just a baby, Mrs. Nemes took it as a given that Moshiach would be there before they would have to deal with sending her away.

Luckily, the Nemes children were home for elementary school—there is a community school for shluchim's kids and for children from the community. The school is so small that they joined every two grades together, resulting in ten (or less) kids per "class" of two grades.

The Nemes children thrived in the small environment, so much so that Mrs. Nemes didn't even consider Bais Rivkah as an option for her eldest daughter, Chaya Mushka. She thought it would be too big and there was no dorm at the time, back in 2004, which worried Mrs. Nemes.

## The Path to Bais Rivkah

Over winter break in elementary school, Mrs. Nemes and Chaya Mushka went to check out the girls' school in Chicago. Mrs. Nemes thought that the visit had gone well and that her daughter would go there until Chaya Mushka asked about Bais Rivkah a few weeks later. She wanted to go to a bigger school, she said.

"Chicago is bigger," Mrs. Nemes reasoned. "It has twenty-five girls per grade!"

"Mommy, Chicago has twenty-five, but Bais Rivkah has 125!"

Mrs. Nemes wasn't against Bais Rivkah, but she thought it would be difficult to monitor her child in so large of a school. The Nemes parents were unsure and didn't settle on Bais Rivkah.

At the end of year brunch on the last day of elementary school, Mrs. Nemes had a conversation with a mother whose daughter was going to Bais Rivkah. She was surprised to find out that the girl would be boarding at the Rosenfeld house, as she didn't know that her friend Mrs. Rosenfeld was taking boarders. The very next day, Mrs. Nemes called up Mrs. Gitty Rosenfeld—and caught the very last spot for Chaya Mushka.

Still unsure of the choice, Mrs. Nemes wrote a letter to the Rebbe. She opened the Igros Kodesh and read a letter where the Rebbe was responding to a bochur who didn't know what yeshivah to attend, advising him to ask his mashpia.

When Mrs. Nemes spoke to her mashpia, her mashpia said that she had had a similar situation before Gimmel Tammuz, and when she wrote into the Rebbe, the Rebbe answered that a girl will learn best where her heart is. Chaya Mushka clearly wanted to learn in Bais Rivkah, so the matter was settled. Mrs. Nemes' daughter thrived in Bais Rivkah—"She took to it like a fish in water."

When it came time for Mrs. Nemes to send her second daughter, Bracha, to high school, Bracha said that she didn't want to go to Bais Rivkah. The size was overwhelming; her personality was different than her older sister. Mrs. Nemes gave her the option of researching other high schools together. This they did, and in the end, Bracha decided that Bais Rivkah really would be the best school for her, despite its large size. However, she was still very nervous about it.

That summer, Hurricane Katrina hit and devastated New Orleans. The Nemes family had to relocate to Crown Heights for the first four months of the school year. Therefore, although the girls still kept their spots at the Rosenfelds, they spent the evenings with their family in the apartment where the family was staying, and only went back to the Rosenfelds to go to sleep. This was such a bracha for the family since Hashem knew exactly what Bracha needed. She was able to be in school in Bais Rivkah, yet still be with her family during the beginning of the year, which is really the toughest time.

When the Rosenfelds stopped taking boarders, Bais Rivkah had already opened their own dorm. This is the place where the rest of Mrs. Nemes's daughters spent their high school years.

"The dorm is an amazing place." Mrs. Nemes expressed her admiration. "It gets better and better every year. It's a place full of fun, where the girls are happy doing good, chassidishe things." The expectations of the girls are very clear, yet that does not diminish the exciting atmosphere. The dorm counselors are chosen with much thought, and the dorm is careful about whom they accept, making for an unbelievable experience for the girls. When Rabbi Nemes brought his daughter to school this year after the summer, he was amazed at the warm welcome each girl received- "It was truly like they were welcoming back a long lost sister."

### **Insight on the Challenge**

When asked about the most challenging part of sending children out of town, Mrs. Nemes replied, "Exactly that. Having them away."

What makes it easier for her is remembering that they're being sent, not simply away, but to a Yiddishe, Chassidishe school. As she says, "It's a real nechama that they're getting a wholesome chinuch." She is proud to see the Simchas Hachaim and chayus that her girls come home with—knowing that they're in this special environment makes it much more bearable to deal with their absence.

When your kids are far from home, it's hard to know what's going on with them. That's why Mrs. Nemes says that keeping an open line of communication—and making sure that girls are always comfortable calling their parents—is key. She and her husband maintained that openness with daily calls to check in with each of their children. "You know when they've had a good day, a bad day, their ups and downs." Mrs. Nemes explains.

This will also keep the kids focused that despite the fact that they're far from home, they're still connected and part of the family. Mrs. Nemes's advice: "Speak to your children every day, so you will always have a pulse of where they are."

Mrs. Nemes's message to in-towner parents is a huge thank you to the warm, caring individuals who invite out of town girls for a Shabbos meal and open their hearts and homes to these girls who may not have elsewhere to go. Some parents will even call the dorm to find out if everyone has a meal, and these kind gestures are extremely appreciated. When a girl is in a dorm, yet doesn't have relatives in Crown Heights, or is a new 9th grader and doesn't know whom to ask for a meal, these families who go out of their way to invite make a big difference to the out of town girls and their parents.

Although her children are in another state, Mrs. Nemes shows us how a mother can still stay connected to her children despite the distance. Seeing the girls infused with such pride for chassidishkeit and learning in the Rebbe's school shows Mrs. Nemes that her children are getting the chinuch that she wants for them. Our Rebbe, too, surely gazes with pride at all his Shluchim, his children far from home, who have such mesiras nefesh for their shlichus. ■



# CLOSE TO HOME

## *In-House Education*

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By Baila Friedman

Grade 11

Shluchos. What keeps them going? One of the main inspirations for our shluchos is the invaluable lessons they learned while attending Bais Rivkah. In preparing this article, I interviewed two shluchos who were in the same class at Bais Rivkah (high school graduating class of 2005). They are now on shlichus in remote locations which require them to homeschool their children. Cheyenna (Avtzon) Schmukler, who goes by the nickname Nene, and Chenchie (Tiefenbrun) Schmukler both share the same last name and are actually double cousins—both they and their husbands are cousins!

Nene Schmukler, a proud shlucha in Corpus Christi, Texas, recalls the strong focus and emphasis on shlichus that she received from Bais Rivkah. Going to a distant location

to bring others closer to Yiddishkeit is not just a faraway dream but a reality to many Bais Rivkah alumni. Bais Rivkah is the training ground for hundreds of future shluchos—The teachers frequently invite shluchim to speak, farbreng, and inspire the girls in the aspect of Shlichus. Students are encouraged to help Shluchim at programs, and many twelfth grade students teach in Hebrew schools throughout the greater New York area.

In addition, the emphasis that Bais Rivkah teachers place on chassidishe Yomim Tovim stays with their students forever. Both Nene and Chenchie remember the time and effort that went into the school decorations, workshops, and videos that built a personal connection with these days. Now they have the tools to instill this

passion in their children, ensuring that Yud Tes Kislev and Yud Shevat are not just ordinary days, but special days with deep meaning.

It's the responsibility of all mothers to ensure that their home atmosphere is warm and happy. However, these mothers have an extra responsibility to entertain and educate their children 24/7. Homeschooling is not like a regular job that has maternity leave, sick days, and vacations. Homeschooling is a full-time job—a full day of bonding, loving, caring, teaching, playing and progressing. Nene described how important it is for her to make her children love school and love learning. She wants her children to feel special and to understand what their family is accomplishing by being on shlichus.

Chenchie Schmukler, a shlucha in Las Cruces, New Mexico, has alternated over the years between homeschooling her children and hiring private teachers. Mothers on shlichus, she explained, need to take the time to plan and coordinate their children's education, as it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children are on their grade's academic level.



*Classmates in Mommy School learning their Alef Beis*



*First Day of 3rd Grade in Shluchim Online School*

She is grateful to the Shluchim Online School for providing her children with real friends and a chassidishe chinuch. However, it is her responsibility to monitor her children's growth and progress.

While it is no easy feat to homeschool four children bli ayin hara, plus care for a baby, Nene Schmukler chooses to look at the positive side. When a mother homeschools her children, she is able to give each child personal attention and special mommy-child time every day!

Homeschooling shluchos get to appreciate every small milestone and accomplishment of their children. Homeschooled children are able to learn and grow at their own pace with a lot of attention from their dedicated teacher, who happens to be their mother. The learning schedule is more flexible and adaptable to each child.

Chenchie recalls how she was able to notice her daughter's need for glasses in a matter of minutes, something which can easily be overlooked in a big classroom. Homeschooling also forms a special connection within the family. The extra efforts Nene makes, like decorating a cake for

her son's virtual Chumash party with his online school class, are what really affect the children in the long run. Nene makes it a priority to create and decorate weekly Parsha projects with her younger children. In this way, she hopes to instill within them a love for Chumash and Yiddishkeit. Many shluchos also work hard to find hobbies for their homeschooled children to keep them occupied- music, art, painting, and sports are just a few of the options.

It's important for the Shluchos to make their children excited about shlichus and the life they are living, by ensuring that the children are involved. Nene's boys, whom she fondly calls her "husband's sidekicks," help give out challah and put tefillin on others beginning at only 8 years old! Chenchie Schmukler explains how she makes her children team players in the family's shlichus. Her ten-year-old son, Meir, is affectionately called "Rabbi Junior" since he helps his father with many activities. Her daughters help her cook, set up, and decorate the room for events. Chenchie explains how this is a big opportunity for her children to grow and learn. She also highlights that there are many special benefits and skills that come along with being on



*Shluchim in Training*

shlichus. Her 6-year-old daughter knows how to make beautiful six braid challahs! Shlichus is not only for adults. It's a whole family project!

One of the difficulties faced by many shluchim is the lack of frum friends nearby for their children to play with. Imagine that your siblings were your only classmates! While this closeness establishes a strong bond within the family, many shluchim make the effort to create additional social engagements for their children. This might entail driving two and a half hours to go to a cousin's birthday party or inviting guests to sleep over for Yom Tov. When it comes to Purim, it's up to the mothers to be involved with preparing and mailing Shalach Manos to their children's friends and making the day special. Chenchie Schmukler makes an effort to enroll her children in Bais Rivkah Day Camp in the summer so that they are surrounded by girls their age and have an opportunity to make friends. Chenchie and Nene Schmukler both appreciate how accommodating the Bais Rivkah staff are to their children. Their girls are always welcomed with open arms whenever they come to New York for Chof Bais Shevat, and they love to join the classes at Bais Rivkah with their new friends.

Thanks to Bais Rivkah, thousands of girls have become proud mothers, shluchos, and leaders, empowered by their rich foundation to instill in their children the same strong Torah education and principles they received. ■

# EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE

Zeesy (Klein) Grossbaum

Graduating class of 1996

Written by Mushka Green

Grade 12

I caught up with Zeesy Grossbaum in her suburban New Jersey home on a Thursday afternoon. Ever the gracious hostess, she offered me lunch and immediately put me at ease with her warm demeanor. This mom-turned-special educator was born and raised in Brooklyn, and remembers never having much to do with children with special needs as she grew up. In fact, Zeesy recalls being frightened of individuals with special needs and even once convinced her mother to take her home from a concert she was attending, when a group of adults with special needs sat down in front of her. This total lack of interaction all changed after she married her husband Moshe in 2000. Before they had gotten married, both were idealistic about becoming Shluchim of the Rebbe. Their chance came in early 2002 when Moshe's brother, Zalman, who directed the Friendship Circle of the Metrowest, offered the young family, which had since grown to include a sweet baby girl of barely two months, the opportunity to establish Friendship Circle of Bergen County.

"As the years passed," Zeesy relates, "I found myself marveling at the way my children were raised. They had grown up among children with special needs and

were so tolerant and inclusive as a result." But as much as her organization grew and expanded to service nearly two hundred families of children with special needs with the help of nearly 700 volunteers annually, it always remained firmly within the realm of social and recreational programming. This all changed in 2015 when the local Hebrew School servicing children with special needs closed its doors due to lack of funding. "We immediately knew we would need to step in," Grossbaum recalls. And indeed they did.

The next fall, Friendship Circle Hebrew School began its inaugural semester with over 40 children with special needs, ranging from Autism Spectrum Disorder to Down Syndrome and more. Running the Hebrew School was a joint effort between a hired director and a team of trained behaviorists who helped with

*"We believe that every Jewish child has the right to be an active member of our communities and it's our responsibility to teach them how."*



*Friendship Circle Director Zeesy Grossbaum and Friendship Circle Participants*

behavioral issues and assisted in identifying realistic and individual goals for each child. When her director left to go back to school and she couldn't find a suitably qualified candidate to fill the position, Zeesy assumed the role of director of the Hebrew School, or curriculum coordinator as she likes to refer to herself. The goal of the Hebrew School is to provide children who don't have the opportunity to receive a Jewish education due to their disabilities, a chance to learn about their heritage. "We believe that every Jewish child has the right to be an active member of our communities and it's our responsibility to teach them how."

Zeesy tells me that her inspiration to continue her work stems from the Rebbe. The Rebbe explains that instead of viewing these children as children with disabilities, we should view them as people with special abilities. These children have special neshamos and it is the goal and privilege of Friendship Circle Hebrew School to tap into this. The Rebbe's approach to people with disabilities labeled him a visionary, and even 30-odd years later when inclusion and sensitivity have become

a forefront issue, we can still learn from the example the Rebbe set.

Once, a group of injured Israeli soldiers came on a trip to New York. One of their stops was 770 where the Rebbe personally addressed them. While the trip had been referred to as a trip for Nechei Tzahal-handicapped soldiers, the Rebbe dissented and instead chose to call them by the name of Metzuyanim- exemplary and outstanding. This whole attitude of realizing the potential in every child is so clearly what motivates Zeesy and her family and allows them to invest in their shlichus. Each child in Friendship Circle Hebrew School is treated like a gem and allowed to flourish to unprecedented heights. Zeesy believes that everyone can learn a lesson from the Rebbe's views just like her organization has. When we meet someone of different or lesser abilities than ourselves, the first thing to ask is "how can I make this person's life better?" With that, Zeesy and I concluded the interview and parted with an open invitation extended to me to come and view her school in action. ■

# THE JOY OF RELATIONSHIP

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Gitty (Spritzer) Stolik

Graduating class of 1969

*I* would love to find that sixth grade English teacher who scandalized us by telling us that the only two things that are certain are “death and taxes.” Years later I discovered that the teacher didn’t make it up – it was Benjamin Franklin.

We were shocked at the boldness of her statement. Young as we were, we had already learned to distinguish between *mandatory* and *optional* aspects of Jewish life. We learned that there are three cardinal sins that were non-negotiable; a Jew is required to give his life rather than transgress them – and paying taxes was not on that list! Fasting on Yom Kippur is an example of a mandatory mitzvah. Feasting on unlimited doughnuts on Chanuka is optional.

But, what about all the aspects of Yiddishkeit that lay between the two extremes of dying for the the non-negotiables [the Torah] and doughnuts?

Life after graduation taught me that I still have a lot to learn about navigating those areas. Especially as a parent, I constantly walked a tightrope trying to convey what is non-negotiable, what is optional but not recommended, what is optional but highly recommended.

How can we make the “*No, you can’t*” or “*Yes, we must*” more palatable to the child, and more important, more successful down the line?

Yiddishkeit, like schools, is all about rules and obligations. School can be stressful, the assignments and tests non-ending. Life can be (even more)

wearing. What will keep us invested in the face of difficulties? And what will tell Hashem that we're sticking with Him through it all?

There's one answer to both questions: A commitment to simcha is a lifetime commitment to Hashem's Torah and mitzvos.

We'll discuss how simcha is all-important soon, but first, let's challenge you to answer this question:

*Is simcha mandatory for our lives or is simcha merely an optional 'feel-good' perk? My sixth-grade teacher did not give us the answer to this, nor did the others down the line through graduation, and I've discovered that most adults don't know the answer either.*

Simcha, surprisingly, is *not* one of the 613 mitzvos. And yet – it's more critical than any mitzvah. There is one reference to year-round simcha in the Torah, but its unusual wording makes it clear it's not a mitzvah:

*"Because you did not serve G-d with joy... you will serve your enemies" (Devarim 28:48).*

If joy is that important, why not come out and tell us so outright?

A comment the Rebbe made to a downcast Jew may offer some insight. "Knowing that you have a Divine soul – how could you *not* be b'simcha!" Similarly, knowing that we have been selected to receive Hashem's precious Torah, how could we not be perpetually joyous? Serving Hashem joylessly is a symptom of a relationship gone off course. Doing a mitzvah – Hashem's command! – without simcha is not one localized short-circuit. The entire motherboard is

malfunctioning. Simcha tells Hashem that we are happy Jews.

When we have a strong, loving relationship with someone, we accept the conditions and rules he makes. First-year teachers might think, "You can't be too nice to the kids or they won't listen to you." Veteran teachers know that when students love their teacher they'll do anything the teacher asks of them.

Those students are experiencing the **joy of relationship.**

Relationship is crucial, because when life gets tough, people weaken. They might feel like "It's just too difficult!" and may chas veshalom "dump" even mandatory aspects of Yiddishkeit. Commitment to simcha is a commitment to our relationship with Hashem.

Education is a delicate blend of discipline, love, awe (with plenty of palpitation and prayerful hope). Let's see what simcha adds to the mix. We'll warm up first on love and joy.

### **Enduring education**

When children see that the Jewish way of life is joyous (not by preaching it – by *doing* it and *being* it!), they will be motivated to maintain it. That's why schools make a big deal when their young students get their first Siddur or begin learning Chumash. All those *siyum* parties may seem like a waste of learning time, but they have enduring value.

Every accomplishment and milestone that is fussed over with lots of positive, enthusiastic feedback tells the child this matter is important to us. It is registered



*Illustration by Raizel Shurpin  
Graduating Class of 2008*

in the mind as a good kind of “big deal.” There are so many of the negative kind of “big deals” in a child’s life! The event gets etched with permanent ink into their memory logs. *Commotion + positive emotion equals commitment.*

### Love or Fear?

Simcha in our avodas Hashem can be accessed through either of two paths, two options completely contrary to each other:

Through *love* of G-d. 2) Through *fear* of G-d.

Most people assume love is the logical medium to joy. It makes perfect sense. Love inflates the heart with joy. It’s a natural outgrowth. A love-ly route with a happy ending.

But there is another route that leads to that same ending and is even more effective and successful. Surprisingly, that route is awe, “fear of Heaven.”

Accessing joy through fear does seem counterintuitive. Fear usually implies “I want to get away from here,” while joy is about *wanting* to be here and present. Love implies connection and relationship. Love does seem to be the foundational path to joy. It is not—and *this misconception must be pointed out.*

Surprising as it may be, the awe (and humility) route provides a more stable foundation than love. A commitment based solely on love is unstable. It could easily end up being self-serving. For example, I love chocolate, so there goes my diet. Love alone is unreliable and does not endure. It is a great conduit for things we like, but when we encounter the things we don’t like, our emotional response is likely to be biased.

Love needs to be underlaid with awe, yira’as shamayim and kabolos ol to keep us on our joy track. **Our deep reverence for an awesome G-d enlists His participation – it helps us get closer, not farther.**

### Kabolos ol with simcha?

Is it possible to raise children today to be compliant and yet feel the pleasure of Yiddishkeit? Won’t kabolos ol turn them off? Shouldn’t we just make sure to fill them

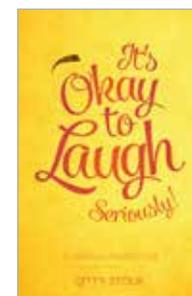
with the pleasure of it all? Kabolos ol may be suffering a popularity dip, but for the Jewish people, it’s always in. We are called Tzivos Hashem (the legions of G-d), and G-d is our loving Father, Master and King.

How do we transmit kabolos ol in a “feel good” generation, where “they’ve got to enjoy it or they won’t do it”? We simply team the kabolos ol with joy and pleasure, as we train them in the habits and mitzvos we want them to retain through adulthood.

And then, instill it by *doing* it and *being* it. Children pick up on tone of voice and body language. They can detect whether we view activities as something desirable or burdensome. They build theories for their own lives based on these emotional subtleties. The practice of mitzvos is not enough; we have to think joyfully. Feelings are contagious and our unspoken words will make the loudest noise.

Children need to see joy integrated into their Torah and mitzvos. That simcha is a fulcrum in our enduring *relationship.*

I had to write bookfuls to become educated on the depth that Chassidic joy offers. We should not only educate joyfully, we should also educate and teach what joy is. I hope young people will have the opportunity to discover what I learned before they reach my age!



Adapted from *NEW JOY, Response to a Changing World.*

*NEW JOY* is a platform for the Rebbe’s message of Elul 5748 to practice simcha b’tahasah- joy purely for Geula. Simcha is not just a way to survive *in galus*, it’s to get us *out of galus*. Embrace the future! Invite it in – with joy. ■



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**tba**  
SALES



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**Aura Chaya (Bitton) Gispan**  
**Graduating class of 1994**

The moon is full tonight, and so is my heart...

Family and friends are gathered, mirroring the glowing moon. The dishes, the smells, the songs, the people; all utterly familiar and predictable, yet there is a palpable sense of mystery on the menu! It is as if we are standing on the edge of the unknown, preparing for a subtle re-ordering of our inner and outer worlds. We are about to flip the narrative of our lives like a delicate matzah (comprised of the very same mind-material, the letters of Chametz we just purged but) with supreme soulspeed so as to keep our thoughts and hopes unleavened. We can finally architect the future we deserve!

**The Seder**

The objective of the game is to (re)create Order so that our everyday minds can align with our highest selves. This requires a quantum leap of faith (which ironically must be preceded by a prescriptive set of steps). To make sense of a mind that is in disarray is no small feat! A special kind of acrobatics is needed to un-contort the fabricated web of tales that life has convinced us is beyond the grasp of faith. Time does, in fact, take time. But tonight, if you open your heart, that time can be accelerated!

Come around the table, and get your game on! We journey together, alongside our most precious companions, but the depth of that journey is entirely individual. Gather the children. We need them (us) to be awake for this journey. They will be our compass.

Direct your attention to the seder plate, this will help organize your mind. It will serve as a visual icon of the unchanging elements that all of our stories share. We will rise through 15 tasks of progressive ascent, encounter 4 distinct personality archetypes, and traverse all 4 planes of existence in this trek across the desert of our psyche to achieve our personal exodus. Stories are plastic just like our minds so look out for patterns and distinctions that make this night different than any other.

Let us start by raising a glass. This gesture is always a signifier that we are moving up into a higher mind. Tonight we will be transported from action to speech to song to silence, and please G-d, if we are oh so lucky, we will touch the core of our soul.

**Kadesh-Sanctification**

The first sip of wine signals to our nervous system to let go of its outward focus and amplify our inner experience. Freedom is when our senses act as portals, windows into the uniqueness of NOW, allowing us to

become more presenced. We can “let go” of any rigid associations, designations, I-think-I-know-it-allness or Pharoahic dominance and set the intention of “letting G-d.” Tonight we are all children of the Infinite conversing with itself. Every flavor and texture holds a distinct message, an experience of show, then tell.

### **Urchatz-Karpas-Yachat**

We are enjoined to leave Egypt every day but we often wait for tragedy to break us out of complacent resignation. Inertia is a powerful contender to change. So we wash ourselves in preparation for a new untainted experience, and we dip a root vegetable in salt water as a direct access point to the root of our pain. We then break a matza tracing the fault lines in our thought process, putting away half for resolution at the end with the satisfying Afikomen. We can now begin to reflect. When did we lose touch with our ideals, with our sense of infinity? When did our imaginations shrink and our mindscape grow smaller than the circumference of our dreams? When was our inner knowing eclipsed by “don’t you dare?” When did we lose touch with the bigger picture of why we came down here?

### **Magid-Rachtza-Motzi-Matzah-Maror-Korech**

We raise the seder plate and declare; this my friends “is the bread of our affliction” acknowledging that the experience of intellectual destitution is in fact the beginning of wisdom. Matzah, as simple a source of sustenance as it is, is wonder-bread for the soul. It is an enormous equalizer that recognizes how little we truly know in the face of all that is. We are all children of G-d. We invite each other to an open-hearted table in an act of solidarity. We will support each other in becoming coherent until our soul’s message is a self-evident truth. We make a solemn oath to go back to wonder, this year in exile, next year in complete awe (yirah-shalem). Until then we will continue to sit around the proverbial fire and give each other strength.

Peh-Sach: the mouth {finally} speaks! Raising our glasses, but also our questions (so many unanswered, unspoken, unformulated questions). We walk in the light and shadows of our questions. A voice deprived of oxygen can easily turn to vice. Sometime arguments are camouflaged as questions. They have much to teach us

nonetheless. Breakdowns are always opportunities for breakthroughs but this time we are reverse engineering the process in order to anchor ourselves in mental, emotional and spiritual freedom. Ask (yourself): What is the pain point that gets in the way of me being Me? Determine in your heart what is the quest-ion you would like to re-solve tonight? How will you make this night different?

Let us give voice to the child (in us): “Mah nishtana?” Questions are redemptive. They are the doorknob by which we can open doors to a new world. The rules of this game require us to suspend our judgements and engage without the static of assumptions that we already know the answers. This is how we learn: noticing what is, and also what is different allows our attention to serve as a pivoting point at which new neural pathways can emerge to reframe our entire experience! What makes this night different from all other nights? How can we cut across the endless night of insistent self-replicating narratives to the start of a new day? What are the re-sources hidden away in our deepest travails? Our questions contain the answers.

On this night we dip into our individual and collective mortar and tears. We re-contextualize our pain, we re-experience it dip by dip, taking care to not let it define us. (You are strong. You are anchored. You are supported. You are loved.) This way we can widen the frame and learn from the past without being submerged by it. You may dip into your memory bank as many times and from as many angles as needed for your freedom to be complete. Always from a place of strength, as often as needed but always with the necessary intervals to stay grounded in the present.

On this night of exclusively eating unleavened Matzah - you will not be blinded by the experience of your tastebuds. You will not be distracted by the illusion of multiplicity. The taste of no-thing will afford you a non-egoic perspective so you can get a glimpse of how beloved you are, always, to the Divine. There is nothing you need to do, because you already are. Nothing can overshadow this connection. You share an eternal bond.

On this night, the emphasis on Maror is not just a culinary accent, but a primary medicine for the amnesia

of time. By actually tasting the bitterness of life rather than covering it and reintegrate them into the redeeming sandwich of the bigger picture and purpose of your life.

On this night of constant reclining, sink into the knowledge that you have already been redeemed. Highlight where you feel/have felt connected and empowered. Lean into the trust that you are entirely supported. This will set the stage for freedom from that which still remains unresolved in your heart. Never let pain overshadow your quintessential worth.

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. The crucible of Egypt was a passing moment that cast a long shadow in the history of time. The gods of status, science, statistics, and false pride had us believe that we will never be enough; that we are too small for our dreams. But underneath the threads of random roulette is a daring account of Divine Design. Had the Almighty not disabused us of our notion of total subjugation we could not have overcome the Mindopoly of Materialism or Melancholy; these are so devastatingly all-encompassing one cannot escape them alone. But we can tap into a higher perspective. We can look for and "see" the hand of Hashem as a prevailing thread of support in our lives. Our experiences can then make more sense to and from the lens of our souls and from the retroactive perspective of the purpose to which we are being led.

And though we may already consider ourselves "versed" in the labyrinthian understandings of "how the world works" we are encouraged to ask, listen, discuss, re-cognize, re-organize, course correct and reclaim our birthright to author our own story. It is a story that is (continuously) gifted to us and no matter how many times we may have told the story there is always more to glean and deeper parts of our identity can be re-defined from within. Come, let us retrace our passages; in remembering our experiences we re-member ourselves and everyone who discusses the exodus from Egypt at length is praiseworthy.

*Aura Chaya Gispan is the founder of Luminescence, a platform for bridging spirituality, creativity and healing through collaborative events and enterprises. She is a holistic health practitioner, herbalist, entrepreneur and strategic consultant specializing in bridging ancient wisdom with the most cutting edge technologies for mindbody optimization and peak performance. She is best known for her signature personal development program, MetaMorphosis, which combines neurofeedback, biofeedback and narrative coaching services to support individuals, groups and organizations in their quest to express their unique and full potential. She also offers consultations to help you custom craft programs/curricula for your community, business or organization. Email [luminescenceNY@gmail.com](mailto:luminescenceNY@gmail.com) for bookings or more information.*

...Until it is time to say the morning shema, the longest night will give way to day. When the sun begins to rise upon the landscape of our minds the child will have begun to wisen into an elder, on an accelerated trajectory much like what happened to Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai. Individually and collectively we will broaden the boundaries of our perception due to our personal sojourn and the crystallization of our Imagi-nation as a gift to the entire world.

L'chaim- Let's drink to that!

### **Shulchan Orech-Tzafun-Berach-Hallel-Nirtza**

We have brought the curiosity of the wise one to the table, accompanied by the shadow of indignation. We have invited discussion between all the parts of us -all we have been authored to become dialoguing with whom we are destined to be. We have turned our hearts inside out, releasing any tears that were trapped within and finally hitting a vein of joy. After a particularly sumptuous meal with all of the variegated requisite courses, we again satiate ourselves with the bread of healing, delighting in that which is beyond our understanding. We give thanks for the meal and with our faith restored we open our door, and our hearts to Eliyahu Hanavi, the bearer of good news.

We then burst into song out of sheer liberation! We praise and we laud and we glorify and, again, we raise our glasses. Now we are ready to continue to harmonize our individual palette of emotions for 49 days so that we can stand at Sinai like one person with one heart and receive the gift of Divine illumination in every aspect of life.

The moon is full tonight, and so is my heart...

Having seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled the gift of freedom...

And having glimpsed the heart of the world...



# Freedom Dancer

---

Miriam (Shain) Raskin  
Graduating class of 2007



“Remember the day you went out of Egypt, all the days of your life.” We are technically more free today than we have ever been, yet we are told to remember Yetzias Mitzrayim every day! There is a lifelong message found in these words, guiding us to unlock our current day issues of anxiety, depression, addiction, and a multifold of other disorders. In my personal journey from disordered eating to freedom dancer, I discovered the code to freedom. Let me share my story.

My bondage to food and dieting began at age twelve. I was feeling self-conscious and decided to lose weight. My goal was to eat as few calories as possible, while having enough energy to get through the day. I went from being a smiley, happy girl, to a serious and uptight one. This was bondage. I could not access myself because my mind was so busy calculating and surviving. I bonded myself to dieting. Most people bind themselves to other things, maybe not to the extreme that I did, but they tie themselves up in some way. Some constantly keep busy, while others develop anxious thoughts or addictions. These methods are used, subconsciously, to either escape uncomfortable emotions or try to control what is not controllable, life.

My process to freedom began when a relative who was studying to become a doctor told me that I was suffering from an eating disorder. He explained to me

the harm I was causing my body. I had thought, up until that point, that I was a really good dieter. Being told that it was a disorder, as well as the health risks involved, propelled me to begin eating normally again. After I finished seminary, I went on to study Nutrition and Dietetics, which further nudged me along my journey to freedom. Studying the scientific aspects to food and digestion clearly differentiated the facts from the myths. When I began counseling clients, I realized how intricately involved food and emotions are.

A few months into working with clients, I came across an article on Intuitive Eating. Intuitive Eating, I read, was about learning to reach inward when selecting food and movement, and to discard those voices that tell us things like “This food is not good for you”, or “You had better go for a run to burn off all those unnecessary calories.” It comes down to asking ourselves what it is that we really need, whether it is food, a friend to talk to, or a nap. Intuitive Eating really resonated with me. I took the method fully aboard with both myself and my clients, separating food and movement choices from most emotions.

However, not dealing with the leftover emotions landed me in trouble when I moved out of Crown Heights and became pregnant shortly thereafter with my third child. Being ill made it difficult to keep busy, and having

no other means at my disposal to get away from my emotions, I was left to face them. I fell into a depression and cried for weeks. At this point I began seeing a therapist and listening to lectures by Rabbi Simon Jacobson and Rabbi Shais Taub. The therapist helped me figure out where my emotions were stemming from, and how to use them as directives. Simultaneously, I began learning what Yiddishkeit was really all about from Rabbi Simon Jacobson and Rabbi Shais Taub. My inner child, full of a zest for life, reawakened, and I was full of aliveness for Yiddishkeit, for my family, and most of all for myself.

I yearned to share what I had discovered with other women and girls, and so I launched "Freedom Dancer" shortly after the birth of my third child. Using dance, song, and a collection of inspirational video clips and articles, I communicate my message of freedom. Freedom Dancer signifies freedom - letting go of what is not in our control, and fully embracing life. The kind of dancing that I do is Chassidic dance. "Chassidic Dancing is the dancing of the soul, and experiencing true joy!" (Archives of Dr. Nissan Mindel, The Significance of Chassidic Dancing.)

How did I get to Freedom Dancer and how could you get there too? It is all in the Torah, if you know how to look for it. The Torah is brimming with guidelines to accessing true freedom. Take a look at something we say every day, the Shesh Z'chiros. Using loose chassidic interpretations as well as looking deeper for the application to our lives, we can interpret the Shesh Z'chiros as follows:

1) Remember the day you went out of Egypt, all the days of your life. Remember to go out of your personal exile every day. Your exile may be anxiety, addiction, a need to constantly be doing, dieting, whatever is holding you back from accessing your true potential.

2) Remember what your heart and mind saw at Har Sinai. There is no greater knowing than experiencing. Know, that you experienced knowing that Hashem is in control of everything. You can let go of your faulty perception that you can control the things around you, and give it up to the Master of the World.

3) Remember Amalek. You will wipe them out. The blockages that are created by turning to your personal

exile or trying to control the world around you, are what create the coldness of Amalek. You must remember that and wipe them out.

4) Remember the "Rebellion in the Desert." It is this coldness created by "Amalek" that makes it possible for a Yid to go against the will of Hashem.

5) Remember what Hashem did to Miriam in the desert. (This remembrance actually refers to the Tzoraas that Miriam got for speaking loshon hora, but for the purposes of this concept, we will focus on Chassidic teachings relating to Miriam herself.) Miriam knew the code for unlocking the barriers. She led the women in song and dance. She was so sure that Hashem would fulfill his promise of redeeming Bnei Yisroel, that she made tambourines with the women, while still in Golus. She embodied "Letting go and letting G-d." Miriam's unwavering belief that Hashem would keep His promise is what enabled the women to keep their channel to Hashem open, accessing their G-dliness, and ultimately knowing what Hashem's will was in regard to refusing to participate in Chet Haegel and participating with a full heart in the building of the Mishkan.

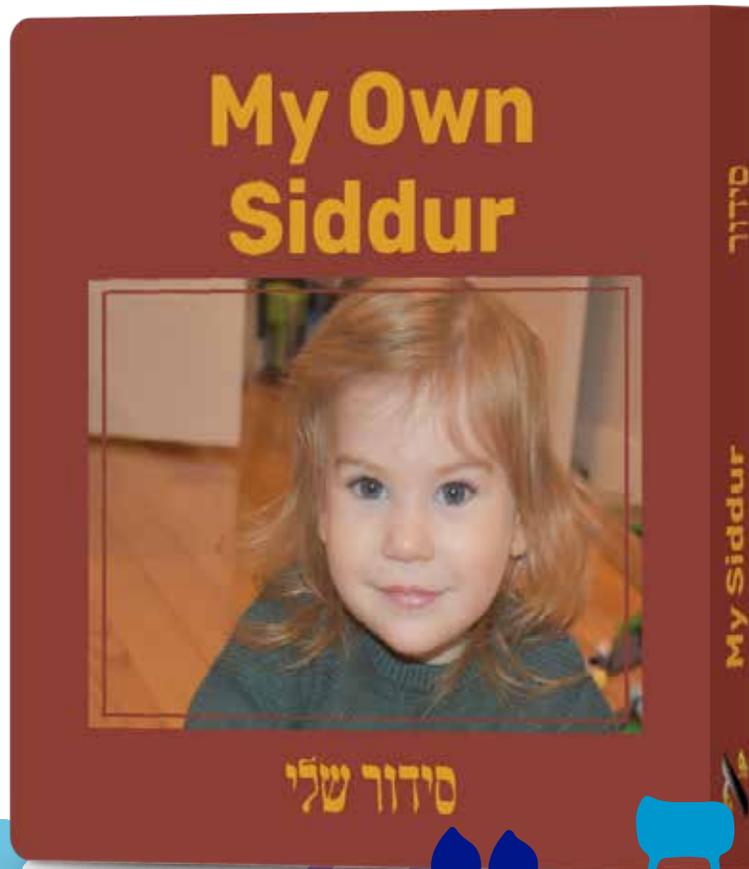
6) Lastly, Remember the Shabbos day, to sanctify it. Shabbos is about being, as opposed to doing. The mundane is elevated by this idea of being. Physicality can be detrimental when used as "other gods," as an escape and/or means to control. Through being - being present and at peace with yourself and your circumstances - you unlock your essence and connect to your own spark of G-dliness, where you intuitively know how to elevate all people and things around you.

Although we are physically free as a Jewish people, emotionally and mentally we each may still have work to do. This is our work now, at the end of Golus and start of Geulah. We, the Jewish women, will lead our nation into freedom. When we embody personal freedom, we will raise the next generation with the paradigm shift they crave and need, and lead our nation to freedom as a whole! ■



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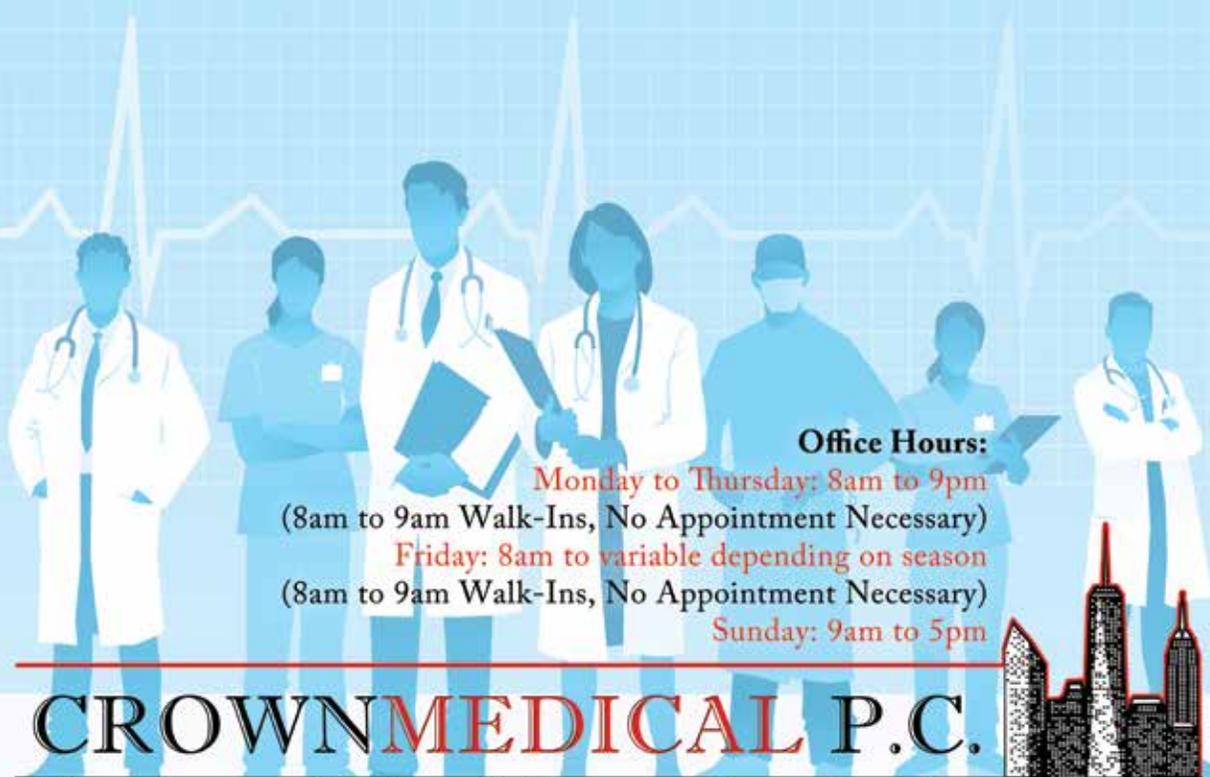
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*"My father proclaimed at a Farbrengen: Just as wearing Tefillin every day is a Mitzva commanded by the Torah to every individual regardless of his standing in Torah, whether deeply learned or simple, so too is it an absolute duty for every person to spend a half hour every day thinking about the Torah-education of children, and to do everything in his power - and beyond his power - to inspire children to follow the path along which they are being guided."*  
-Hayom Yom, 22 Teves

From Headstart all the way through the Division of Higher Learning, Bais Rivkah has been experiencing recent growth-spurts. With an attitude of "Maalin Bakodesh" - and the education of our children is most definitely kodesh- our educators are dedicated to implementing changes on a steady basis, aimed at improving the chinuch of our Bais Rivkah girls. It is this growth-oriented mindset that breeds success.

Here are some of the latest and greatest updates from each department:

## Headstart Program



The Headstart Division has just introduced a new position to their staff; the teachers now gain tremendously from the trainings led by Ms. Ruth Landsman, the new Director of Teacher Support.

The faculty has scheduled three PD (Professional Development) days, when students go home early so their teachers can be treated to workshops that will b'ezeras Hashem ensure that those students will return to even better classrooms the following day.



Headstart is proud to share that they finally have a teachers' room to call their own! This place is truly "teacher-heaven", boasting beautiful leather couches for lounging, a pantry and fridge stocked with food, computers, and plenty of space to breathe, unwind, and prepare.

## Elementary Primary Grades

At Bais Rivkah Primary, both the Hebrew and English departments work tirelessly to ensure that their classrooms and hallways are filled with happy students who are living בבל דרניך דעוה every day.

This year, a new עניני משיח וגאולה curriculum was introduced to the students. A powerful lesson follows davening every Sunday morning, helping to keep the girls focused on Moshiach throughout the day's learning.



In honor of "שבת" and "שבת" this year, each class partook in decorating the hallways of school. The girls love to stop and admire their handiwork.

Morah Baylie Vail was recently appointed as Bais Rivkah Primary's base commander, and ever since, they've had hundreds of students climbing the ranks throughout the year!



ני"ב שבת, the girls enjoyed an art workshop which was centered around the theme, "letting our inner beauty shine." Teachers also enjoyed their own paint night with Bais Rivkah alumna, Estee Klein.



A Jewish Book Fair every spring highlights the best of from reading material so that students are encouraged to spend their summers reading quality, kosher books. At the fair, (which is also open to the community,) Bais Rivkah's very own budding authors have their pieces of writing featured on display. In the past, some of the fairs have featured local author and Bais Rivkah alumna, Sara Blau, who shared the inside scoop on the writing and publishing processes of her books, with the students.

also took center stage this year, with the מידה of being encouraged through classroom contests, an art expo, and creative writing projects.

## Upper Elementary

Mrs. Gitty Rosenfeld has assumed the role of Limudei Kodesh Principal for grades 4-8. She places tremendous focus on fine-tuning the curricula for all subjects, and ensuring that every student is truly noticed and cared for. Her hard work has quickly taken effect, as students can proudly show you their beautiful, newly-designed skills workbooks for Chumash and Yedios Klolios. With these new modes of learning, girls are excelling in their studies.



The updated tech-based attendance system enables teachers to record their students' daily attendance more efficiently and precisely. And thanks to the wonderful upkeep of the teachers' room (always fully stocked with food, coffee and tea), monthly Rosh Chodesh lunches and raffles, as well as weekly chinuch learning gatherings provided for the teachers, our elementary educators are fueled with energy and inspiration to continue doing their holy work.



## High School

"Yiddishe Gashmius iz Ruchnius." Now, with the nutritious breakfasts provided every morning after davening, the girls can energize themselves before diving into a day of fruitful learning.



The freshly-painted and newly-furnished Learning Lounge provides a welcoming space for students to learn with their tutors, have a chat with a staff member, study after school, or enjoy quality time with each other during breaks.

The Shluchos program was introduced to high school four years ago, and has Baruch Hashem taken off very successfully. Two shluchos per grade work with sincere dedication and care, starting in the morning by tutoring students one-on-one in Limudei Kodesh, and then going on to arrange extra-curricular programs for the girls. They coordinate schoolwide projects such as Shabbaton, Production, Achos Hatmimim, Hachanos, & Yomei Dipagrah; and most importantly, they are dedicated to the girls in every way possible.



Newly installed Smartboards in the high school building provide teachers a smooth and convenient means of maximizing every precious minute of classroom learning.



And to keep themselves inspired in their work, the teachers arrange a biweekly shiur, called Shiurei Chana, where they motivate each other with food for thought on Chinuch.



A rotation of teachers visiting the dorms has been set in place; the "dormies" look forward to special weekly visits from different teachers, who stop by to see how they're doing and treat them to some delicious homemade goodies.



## Division of Higher Learning/Seminary

Seminary Aleph's two-week trip to Eretz Yisroel continues to be the highlight of the girls' year, with an improved itinerary each year.



Seminary prides itself in being not only a place where the girls receive a real Torah education, but where they are inspired to give the same to others as well. The Adult Education Program for Seminary Beis students is one new way in which the Division of Higher Learning is facilitating this leadership skill. In addition, the Teacher Training Program for Seminary Beis has been growing from year to year, producing well-trained teachers for our students' futures.

Thanks to the addition of separate extra-curricular coordinators and madrichot for Seminary Aleph and Seminary Beis, the seminary students are treated to more programs, Shabbatons, and Farbrengens than ever before.



Seminary has been growing exponentially from year to year, and now, having completely outgrown their building, Seminary Bais learns in three new classrooms in the neighboring building.



With the help of Hashem and the Rebbe's brachos, Bais Rivkah will continue to grow M'chayil el Chayil in its approach to Chinuch; its students will be educated in the purest path of Torah and Chassidus; and they will go on to change the rest of the world, sharing the same kind of education.

One half-hour at a time.

# CHINUCH TANK

IF YOU WERE GIVEN \$25,000  
FOR BAIS RIVKAH,  
HOW WOULD YOU  
USE IT?

Compiled by Shani Freeman  
Grade 12

## RIVKA (KUGEL) DRIZIN GRADUATE OF 1978

If I had \$25,000 to pitch an idea in Chinuch to improve our girls' education, it would probably be to have some in-school extracurricular activities such as dance, gym, art, etc.

When we were in high school on Snyder Avenue, in between classes, our class would go to the back of the classroom and dance to our own singing. I remember that so fondly. It was pure enjoyment and a sure stress-release, although nobody ever spoke about 'stress' in those days.

I know Art is given in some classes, and the production is an outlet for the girls' talents, but ongoing recreation/

creative classes in all grades would be where my \$25,000 would go. Each girl has talents that should be developed, and a little break from the rigid academic schedule would only enhance the curriculum and make the girls happier and better students as a result.

Thank you, Bais Rivkah! May you go from strength to strength!



## TZIPPY (ROSENBLUM) SIMPSON GRADUATE OF 1980

I would designate a space for teachers to talk to students.



## C. D. GRADUATE OF 2017

As a student in high school, studying for exams and preparing for projects is what takes up most after-school time. For students living at home with a bunch of younger siblings, or even in a dorm with a lot of girls, studying can get pretty stressful with all the background noise of lots of people. If I had \$25,000 to enhance one small thing in Bais Rivkah, it would be to create a study space that is off school grounds. The study space would include different kinds of study areas, some with couches, stools, and tables, desks, bean bags, etc., as well as light refreshments, coffee (lots of it), gum, and perhaps a special incentive for girls that come often.

The space would also include a copy machine, every supply imaginable, a full set of all the seforim and books necessary for any report, as well as (filtered) computers for research and typing up reports. There would also be files for every teacher, and any handout that was given is stored in case a girl was absent or missed a class. The space would take away from the stresses of needing to get that paper that was left at school, finding a kosher coffee shop that isn't jam-packed with blasting music, and many of the other headaches involved in studying and preparing projects. By creating a space that is outside of school that girls can feel comfortable going to, it can create a more positive, stress-free and even

enjoyable studying experience and overall improve the atmosphere of school.



**ANONYMOUS**  
**GRADUATE OF 2014**

With \$25,000 I would:

Number 1: Pay the teachers well, and pay them on time.

Number 2: Expand the school with another building. Bais Rivkah is, kein ayin hara, bursting at the seams. Larger classes make it more difficult for teachers to give individualized attention and for students to thrive. More space—and an increase in staff—would help.

Number 3: Hire a team to review all curriculums, both in Judaic and secular studies departments, across all grade levels to ensure that they are thorough, properly scaffolded, and do not overlap.



**CHANIE (HOROWITZ) VOGEL**  
**GRADUATE OF 1988**

I want to thank all those involved in this beautiful initiative. With \$25,000, I would love to start an organization which I hope can affect Bais Rivkah (and other schools as well):

To give teachers the skills to effectively run their classroom and discipline without saying anything that can inadvertently hurt any child. My idea would be to have trained staff teach faculty how to sensitively convey any message in a way that will be most beneficial to every student.



**BLUMIE (MOROZOW) PIEKARSKI**  
**GRADUATE OF 2012**

Must we limit ourselves to \$25,000? I would like to propose some modifications to the current structure of Bais Rivkah, that I trust would greatly enhance the

Chinuch of our girls. My hope is that someone reading this will believe enough in the mission to fund it.

1) Limit class sizes, preferably at fifteen. In a more intimate environment, everyone wins; teachers can more readily ensure that their lessons are geared to every single student, and with the extra attention, students become more receptive to the lessons.

2) Support the teachers. Introduce to the staff someone who will help teachers plan their lessons, give insight to their classroom management, and sit down together with them to discuss how to reach each student. Raising the salaries of teachers and increasing their benefits would also make certain that talented teachers would not have to leave due to financial concerns.

3) Update the curriculum. With a cross-referenced, all-encompassing curriculum, the precious class time of both students and teachers will be maximized. I would like to suggest implementing the in-depth study of a sefer that I personally find fundamental and practical: Likkutei Amarim of Tanya. In addition, perhaps we can add to the curriculum a course on life skills. This would include education about health and fitness, balancing multiple responsibilities, the basics of financing, and such.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” We must recognize the immense responsibility of education, and be willing to continuously amend and adjust.



**RIVKY (KOTLARSKY) BRONSTEIN**  
**GRADUATE OF 1978**

If I had \$25,000 to better improve Bais Rivkah, I would focus on helping individual students. Often children are in need and can use some extra care. \$25,000 isn't a lot, but it's still something that can make a tremendous difference. I would offer teachers discretionary money (between \$100-\$1,000) to help out students. Based on the needs that the teacher sees, the teacher will use that money to help out the child. If a teacher sees a child in need of shoes, a backpack or even a notebook, the teacher can use that money to purchase it for the

child. For example, often children will show up without gloves in the winter due to lack of money at home. With this extra money, the teachers can tune in to the needs of the children to help them out. The teachers can also use this money to take each child out separately for ice cream once during the year, just to show the children that somebody cares, and to give them some time and attention.



**SOSIE SUFFRIN**  
**GRADE 10**

If I had \$25,000 to better Bais Rivkah, what would I make better? The first thing that came to my mind was to renovate a part of the school building. The place I would pick first to renovate would be the shul. I would focus on the room temperature. Since the building is old, the shul is not always adequately heated or cooled. When it's hot, it's hot! And even the fans are not sufficient. In a room of over 500 girls, concentrating can

be hard in a suffocating, humid room. When it's cold it can sometimes reach the temperatures of outside! It's hard to conduct proper school behavior and have the proper concentration during davening when wearing a coat, gloves, and scarf. It might be a small change, but that is ultimately where high schoolers start each day; a little improvement there can be a great improvement for all of us.



**Y. A.**  
**GRADUATE OF 1990**

I would like to see a program that encourages girls to speak to a mashpia. Perhaps specific Morahs in the school can be chosen to fill the role of mashpia, and the girls can then choose the Morah they feel most comfortable talking to. I believe in the importance of building Yiras Shomayim in addition to learning. I would like to see my daughter more interested in Davening, learning Torah, and doing Mitzvos including Ahavas Yisroel.

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# Embrace Moments



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Anonymous

I was on vacation.

I had nothing more in mind besides for the book I was reading to relax.

And with me, was a Bais Rivkah teacher.

We sat side by side, sharing meal expenses, experiences and adventures.

But her vacation was so very different from mine.

Rosh Chodesh morning, as I sat on our balcony enjoying my coffee and the rising sun over water, I heard her voice, on her phone. She was recording the Hallel, enunciating every word distinctly, singing the tune slowly so her students could follow along with their own brand new siddurim at home.

Exploring tourist venues, I was thrilled to pick up trinkets here and there for family and friends, confident that my steady paycheck and hard-earned salary would cover my costs; after all, I'd saved quite a while to be able to afford the luxury of a few days in paradise. Her budget was so very different. I knew she hadn't been paid in more months than I could comfortably fathom. Still, the first thing she said on entering the souvenir shop

*This Bais Rivkah teacher spent her vacation thinking about her students.*

was, "What can I buy for my students?" Even I got caught up in the fun of finding the perfect gift and then observed silently as she methodically ensured that each one was the same, so none of her 25 students would have reason to rear green-headed jealousy monster's head, so none would have any reason to experience negativity under her watch. These were her children, and she budgeted and planned as if they were her very own.

And let's not forget the postcards!

While I lounged around, intent on fulfilling my vacation goal, complete relaxation, there she was, painstakingly handwriting a message to every single child on an Island postcard that she would mail to the little girl's home.

I'm not a completely self-centered person. I help people, I think of others, I work in a service-oriented profession, I share what I have. But when I stand with her, I'm a pasty reflection of the true selflessness that this Bais Rivkah teacher demonstrated, this Bais Rivkah teacher who is never on vacation from her students.

When I stand with her, I understand why the Torah refers to Moshe as the parent of Aharon's children, (ואלה תולדות משה)

(ואהרן), where Rashi explained that his students were considered his very own children. These students were never far from this Morah's mind. Like a parent who goes away for a few days and worries about the babysitters and the gifts to bring back, and who will remind the child to brush her teeth in the morning, this Morah spent her vacation thinking about her children.

I was on vacation, distanced from my job, my responsibilities, my life back home. ■

Compiled by Danit (Friedman) Schusterman  
Graduating class of 1997

'I remember being in elementary school and let's just say I was NOT one of the 'cool' girls. I made a sleepover for my birthday and was terrified no one would come. I invited one of the popular girls, never thinking she actually would come, but she was so sweet and she came and she made me feel like a million bucks. We're friends to this day.'

Sara Young

'Mrs. Minsky taught French in high school. She always dressed in a refined and beautiful manner She always smiled at me in the hallway whenever she saw me even though she wasn't my teacher. I'll always remember that.'

Dina L.

'I always appreciated how Mrs. Piekarski, the vice principal, always treated me with so much respect. She spoke to me almost as an equal, not as a student who was

lower than she was . Very down to earth. Always liked that.'

Chaya Z.

'Was always so inspired by Bracha Leah (don't remember last name) she was our GO head. Loved hearing her speak.'

D.L.G.

I was new, an out of townner and Chani Flint took me under her Wing. Will never forget that.'

C.S.G.

'Always liked Mrs. Rhodes. Fascinating woman, nicest teacher.'

Rochel

'I was in tenth grade. I had ink stains on my hands, a whiff of Beis Rivkah french fries emitting from my backpack, and a glazed expression because my head was in another place. I was in Bookland. The

characters from the novel I read the night before felt more alive and real to me than any class. Miss (Chenny) Avtzon pulled me over. She asked me what was up. Despite my slightly antagonistic view of authority at the time, she got me talking. About books and philosophy and if non-Jewish novels are good or bad for me. We sat there on the benches in the Shul for about an hour. Miss Avtzon excused me from my missed class. Nothing dramatic changed because of our conversation that day, but looking back, I believe the shift in my high school experience started there. When a teacher showed me she cared and made me realize that I care too. Thank you Miss Avtzon!'

Moussia Gurevitch

'I came to Bais Rivkah for a short while in the ninth grade, and then my family moved. A few months after our move by lovely Bais Rivkah classmates each chipped in \$4 to fly me in for Chof Beis Shvat. This touched me deeply.'

Anonymous

# TIME LAPSE

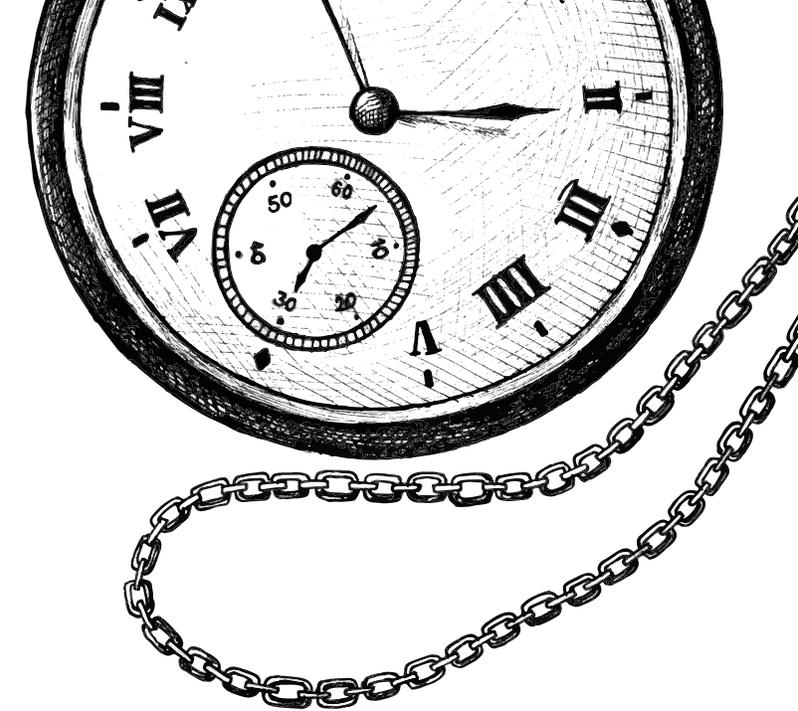
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Mrs. Rochel Leah (Rivkin) Brook  
Graduating class of 1975

By Zelda Schwartzberg  
Grade 11

When I was in Bais Rivkah High School, each class had twenty-five to thirty girls, with just one class per grade. There were approximately 125 girls in the whole high school, the size of a single grade now! Because the high school was relatively small, I knew most of the students of all four grades. I have great memories of being a ninth grader and hanging out with the twelfth graders in the basement of the Bais Rivkah school building, which was then on Snyder Ave. I remember being a big sister to a ninth-grader when I was in twelfth grade. It was easy to do that since we all knew each other anyway. It suited my personality to have lots of different friends. I had friends with whom I would study and friends with whom I would shop. Some friends were more for spending time with on Shabbos afternoons, and so forth. Although there were no Shabbatons or similar programs as they have today, school was fun. It felt like one, big, happy family.

I had non-Lubavitch classmates in Bais Rivkah as well, since many Bais Rivkah students were not from Lubavitch homes. Many of their parents sent them to Bais Rivkah because, from what I heard, the school would accept girls whose parents couldn't afford to pay high tuition. We were all friends, regardless of our different backgrounds. (I had quite a few non-Lubavitch neighbors, as well, and all the kids played together and



got along just fine) We all learned about Chassidishe Inyonim and Chassidishe Yomim Tovim. A few girls actually became Lubavitchers, perhaps because they were so immersed in a Lubavitch environment. (Back then, since Camp Emunah was the only frum girls' sleepover camp, there were so many girls there from non-Lubavitch homes, and, just like in Bais Rivkah, we all got along so well. It was almost as if they were all Lubavitchers for 2 months!)

Bais Rivkah used to be invited to Bais Yaakov conventions and they would send a few representatives to participate. (In fact, Bais Rivkah still gets invited! -Ed) I went to two of these conventions, one in Toronto and one in Cleveland. Even though we were a small group, all of the Bais Yaakov girls would end up hanging out with the Bais Rivkah girls. We would farbreng and discuss many aspects of Yiddishkeit and Chassidishkeit. The other girls always left the Bais Yaakov conventions thrilled to have met us. You never know, besha'as ma'aseh, what impact you're having on people. Even to this day, while I'm shopping in Boro Park, I'll meet some of these Bais Yaakov alumni, and we'll remember each other from those Bais Yaakov conventions or Camp Emunah.

When I was in high school, every class had its own mechaneches. She would initiate private conversations



with each girl, once a week, to find how she was doing. The teachers sincerely cared about the students. Mrs. Neiman, our Navi teacher, was also our mechaneches one year. I remember speaking with her privately and she wanted to know how I was doing.

Mrs. Neiman, from Williamsburg, always showed great respect for Lubavitch. She is a very warm and caring person and showed a lot of interest in my life. I still inquire about her. She emphasized to us the importance of being a mensch, and she taught that to us by example. She also showed us, not just lectured us, on how to behave properly and dress in a tznius fashion. I deeply respected her because she never preached what she herself didn't practice. She was a wonderful role model of all the things she taught.

Rabbi Gordon, from Maplewood, NJ, was one of my seminary teachers. He used to come into class and tell us wonderful stories about the Rabbeim. He was a real, live, walking Chassid. He was completely sincere, totally emes, and I enjoyed his classes since I felt so much respect for him.

Rabbi Groner, the Rebbe's secretary, was our Tanya teacher in high school. Often, Rabbi Groner would read the first line of a perek in Tanya, and speak for two hours about that first line. During some classes, after a few words of Tanya, he would immediately share many stories that would illustrate that particular point. He not only had a wealth of knowledge, but because he was present during countless hours of yechidus, he heard the different questions that people had, and what the Rebbe answered. Today, you have JEM videos and Living Torah, but we were very lucky that the Rebbe's personal secretary taught us! I look back now and understand that there was no one better to teach us than Rabbi Groner. I don't think that back then we appreciated just how special it was that he was our teacher.

Mrs. Rochel Rubin, nee Piekarski, a Shlucha in Albany, NY, was my Mishlei teacher in elementary. She taught us something that stayed with me forever: Whatever a person sees, reads, and hears always remains inside of your head, even if it is in the back of your head, and you can never forget it, even if you think you forgot it. There

was a whole discussion about going to the movies because many of my friends and I used to go to the movies. It wasn't a terrible thing to do, especially back then when such entertainment was much more modest than today, but she was trying to tell us that whether it's watching a movie or reading a secular book, it remains inside your brain and never leaves you. These words made a very strong impression on me.

Nevertheless, when I was growing up, there weren't many Jewish books, and I used to go to the Brooklyn Public library every week with my friends. My parents allowed me to have a library card, and my friends and I would take out books, do school reports there, and use the encyclopedia since there was no Google or computers. Once I had children of my own, however, I didn't take them to the public library, as the amount of Jewish books available was always increasing. Now, I take my grandchildren into a Judaica store, where there are so many Jewish books for them to read.

I want to recommend to girls in school today to take advantage of learning and studying. I know that once I was out of school, I didn't continue my studying very much. There's a time for everything in life, and when you are in school, you should really take advantage of the learning. It's nice to be in a school with a social environment, but I sometimes feel that the learning isn't stressed as much as other activities. When you are in school, you should learn, because once you're out of school, you have other obligations, and you can't always go to classes. Take advantage of this precious time before you're involved in taking care of a home and family.

As I get older, and while both looking back on my school years and seeing what is going on in the world today, how so many Shluchim and Shluchos are spreading Yiddishkeit and Chassidus all over the world, I realize what a great impact Bais Rivkah had on me. Bais Rivkah instilled in me the desire to raise a frum, Chassidishe family, with the Rebbe's goal of Hafatzos Hamaayanos Chutzah. I was taught all about Yiddishkeit and what the Rebbe expects of me, while I was in Bais Rivkah. They were wonderful years of acquiring a vast amount of spiritual treasures. ■



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# BRtalent

Lettering by Mushkie Uliel  
Graduating class of 2006



*"As Chassidim, education is teaching the child how to blend the different colors of life, both mundane and spiritual into one, and using it all to follow in the ways of Torah joyously."*

Chaya Devorah Nelken  
Graduating class of 2017



**"Our Wedding Day"**  
Chani (Chein) Lunger  
Graduated Seminary in 2012

Born healthy, my brother Menachem battled a brain tumor for the last 13 years of his short life before he passed away at the young age of 19. His love for Torah & Mitzvos was apparent when small things like walking & eating became a challenge and he needed to rely heavily on others for help especially in his last few years. Going to Mikva, walking to shul every day & putting on tefillin were daily challenges, yet he pushed himself till the last. This painting depicts him at a Siyum Sefer Torah in 770 six months

before he passed away.

May we merit Moshiach today where pain, suffering, and sickness will be a thing of the past and all be reunited with our loved ones.

Hindy (Bruchstat) Greisman

Graduating class of 1998



**'Illumination'**  
Chana (Cohen) Motchkin  
Graduating class of 1994



# ONCE A BAIS RIVKAH GIRL, ALWAYS A BAIS RIVKAH GIRL

Esther (Edelman) Kosofsky and Henshi Gorodetsky  
Graduating class of 1979

On Sunday, Chof Alef Shevat 5779, the Bais Rivkah High School graduating class of '79 met for their 40th reunion. Women from Atlanta, Toronto, Montreal, Honolulu, New York State, Massachusetts, Texas, and as far away as Brazil, joined together over coffee and refreshments to reminisce, renew friendships and learn together.

It felt as if we had just strolled through the halls, worrying about finals, excited for the summer and our post-high school adventures at Gan Yisroel Day Camps throughout the world. With most of us being grandmothers, and many on shlichus for over 30 years, it felt surreal and inspiring at the same time.

Name tags were not necessary; but we all, automatically, reverted to our maiden names.

The love and warmth in the room was palpable and having our former teacher, Mrs. Miryam Swerdlov join us, made us feel as if we were still learning "Historia" and laughing at her sharp wit.

Pearl (Rottenstreich) Kransnjansky welcomed everyone with a story of the Rebbe that appropriately spanned forty years. Pearl, who flew in from Hawaii, is a powerhouse in the Aloha state and has been responsible for spreading Yiddishkeit wherever she goes. Esther (Edelman) Kosofsky, our emissary in Longmeadow, MA and a published author, introduced the brilliant and entertaining Mrs. Miryam Swerdlov. Morah Swerdlov shared personal stories and insight into the life and legacy of the Rebbetzin and ended with an acrostic

poem, encouraging the women to be their best and to continue to instill Emunah and Chassidus wherever they are. As women, life can be overwhelming and complicated, but with the foundation of Bais Rivkah, we learn to rely on Hashem and not sweat the small stuff.

The highlight of the reunion was a slideshow with photos from school days, including elementary school class pictures. I think many of us were thrilled that there wasn't the "World Wide Web" in those days to capture some "awkward" moments, like our class trip to Washington DC, where we thought it was a great idea to create a "human pyramid".

All participants received a commemorative mug with the Bais Rivkah logo and, "Class of '79" imprinted on the mug. We can't wait for our 50th reunion b'ezras Hashem, may it be in Yerushalayim with the Geulah Shleima! ■



Photo taken at 40th reunion

# BY MY SIDE

Yehudis (Heber) Bluming  
Graduating class of 1998

We all have something to share. When we open our hearts and allow our experiences to merge with those of others, we become strong together. With this strength, we can change the world. I wanted to share with you something personal that gave me strength and I hope can be of help to someone else too.

Earlier this year, on the night Chof Beis Shevat, I went into labor and BH gave birth to a healthy baby boy.

During this pregnancy, I was pretty nervous about giving birth. It has been a year since my mother's passing. This would be my first child born without my mother's presence. So much of a Simcha is to share it with others, and I wanted to share it with my mother. I knew she would have had so much nachas, yet she was not going to be there. I was anxious and prayed to bring this holy child into the world with inner strength and Simcha.

On the special day of Chof Beis Shevat, the passing of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, I received a video via WhatsApp from my niece. She composed this video for Bais Rivkah High School in honor of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. As I watched the video I was amazed to see a little 10-year-old girl receive a dollar from the Rebbe in honor of her birthday. The Rebbe bentched her as her mother stood at her side. That little girl was me, close to 30 years ago. I was taken aback and quite emotional to watch this touching eye to eye moment with the Rebbe and me. I watched the video four or five more times, gleaning strength each additional time.

That night, though two weeks early, and without much warning, I went into labor. Now I walked into the hospital with confidence, knowing that I had my two pillars, my mother and the Rebbe at my side.

I came to learn that the bond of a mother and her child is beyond the limits of time and space. A mother will never leave her child. The Rebbe will never leave his Chassidim, and Hashem will always be there for His children!

May we soon be reunited with all of our loved ones with the Rebbe leading our way as we march to Yerushalayim with all of our precious kinderlach! ■





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